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girls and asked that the chief might pardon them this trespass. Then the chief sounded the horn to assemble his troups. When the troups had assembled on one place, they were told that it was finished. Now the chief seized his war-horn, blew it and jumped about. All the troups intonated praise-songs to praise the chief; they said: "Mogôdô, the neck with fat-wrinkles, Mogôdô, he rules with the rain-horn." It is 'Mogôdô-Mme-a—Phedola," he says: 'I kill a person'—he kills; he says; 'I make live'—he makes live."

28. Then the chief took his spear, danced, pushed it into the ground and pointed to the East. He said to his warriors: "From the East there are coming black ants. You will fight with them, and you will defeat them." Then he pushed down again, pointed to the West and said: "From the West there will come red ants, these will defeat you over and over again."[29]

29. Chief Mogôdô fought also with Khašane, the son of his father. But Khašane fled into the country called Tshale.[30] Then the people called him to come and stay in another country called Moduveni,[31] where a certain man namely Mamadêba, a son of Khašane grew up, who found the Word of God at Port Elizabeth, who was found fighting against the darkness in the days of Rev. Knothe and Reuter.[32] He was killed by the second female chief Masalanavô for the sake of the Gospel.

30. Mogôdô had two sons. When they quarrelled about the chieftainship of their father, the chieftainship was given his daughter who became the first female chief Možaži. The brothers were driven out of the country by the magic power of the little calabash[33] and the fire-stick[34] which had been strengthened with medicines of driving people out of the country.

31. So Možaži became chief, she was a good ruler over the country Lovedu like her father. She also killed the wrong-doers namely the socerers and thieves and liars. She produced rainfall like her father, she received homages of chiefs who came from far with treasures of different kinds and elephant-tusks—coming from Zululand, Sekhukhuni, Ramabulana[35] and Ñguñgunyane.[36]

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[29] A prophecy attributed also to the chief Sekhukhuni.
[30] In the West.
[31] In the West.
[32] Missionaries among the *Golovê*.
[33] The holy vessels of the tribe.
[34] The holy vessels of the tribe.
[35] In Vendaland.
[36] In Thongaland.

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the royal kraal. The children of the chief's kraal are attending school at her command.

37. Chief Khesêthwane does not allow that a person enters her kraal with shoes on his feet. When somebody approaches the main entrance, he must take off the shoes and leave them outside the main-entrance that he may be allowed to enter the meeting-place.

*The beginning of the government of female chiefs in Loveduland*

1. The last male chief is Mogôdô. He had two sons: Malegudu and Kheêbe. These young men quarrelled about the chieftainship of their father when he was still alive. Now they had a sister who was called Možaži. So the chieftainship was given her that she might be the ruler of the tribe. The brothers were driven away.

2. When a person is made chief in Loveduland, he must be given the fire-stick and the water-calabash. Now they gave the sister the fire-stick and the calabash that she might bring it to Malegudu, the elder brother. But it is said that they had been strengthened by magic charms which make a person mad who looks at them with his eyes. He will behave like a mad person, he will leave his home, go away and move to another country and dwell there.

3. They say when Malegudu had looked at the fire-stick and the calabash, he left the land of his father, went to Vendaland and died there. Kheêbe the younger son who had quarrelled with him about the chieftainship was treated in the same way as the elder one. He left the country went to Thôvôlô[45] and died there.

4. So the chieftainship was given the daughter of Mogôdô namely Možaži I. She had a daughter called Masala-Navô. She followed her mother in the chieftainship.

5. Masala-Navô had no child until her old age. But she had a younger sister. She had two children. The first child was a boy, the second one a girl. The girl-child called Khesêthwane was chosen to be chief. She is Možaži who governs still to-day.

[45] In Portuguese-East-Africa.

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morula tree (*Sclerocarya caffra*), from which such delightful cider is made. In the distance you hear the hoarse note of a *phalafala* horn, then the shrill ululations of women. They come nearer. You can hear them shout the words, '*Malematsha wee, Malamatsha wee; budi ga dzwala ga dzwala ga fɔlɔja, ga vuɬa vuphabaleni*' (Malematsha, Malematsha, the goat I bore, I bore and miscarried, as a goatling I returned)—the praise song of a district in Ulovedu. Then at a bend in the road you come upon a picturesque procession: in front walks a man, blower of the horn, followed by twenty women each with a calabash of beer placed in a basket on her head, a gift to the queen from the area of Malematsha. Perspiration runs down their faces; but they do not lose courage, for before they arrive at at their destination they will sit down by the roadside to quench their thirst from one or two of the calabashes they carry. Any one who then happens to pass will beg for a little, and he will not beg in vain.

You continue your way. A pigsty and an ash heap mark the approach to a village. A passer-by, spying a woman about her household duties, shouts her greetings, '*Re fiɬhulelemi*' ('Still our hunger') to which comes the reply, '*Fiɬhulelani zenu,*' a conventional refusal, but equivalent to 'Be hungry nicely' or 'Still your own hunger.' A second woman supplements it with the information, 'We have only just put on the pot.' If the food had been ready or the woman had wished to give the passer-by a tit-bit, the reply would have been, 'Here is food. We are eating.' That one of the ways of greeting should be associated with the begging of food is typical of the Lovedu. Some one returning from a visit to another area is greeted with, 'What are they eating over there,' or 'What are they stinting us of,' and the reply invariably is, 'They are being killed by hunger,' even if there is plenty and you have been royally entertained. There are greetings associated with activities: if you pass a man or woman working in the fields, you say, 'Workers,' and the modest reply is, 'We are hardly working at all'; to a woman carrying wood, you say, '*A di voyi dikhunye*' ('Let the wood return') and the reply is, '*Di voyile*' (It has returned). In fact, learning to greet people politely in the Lovedu language is not at all the simple thing it is in English.

At last you find yourself before the village of Raselaka, larger than any of those you have passed on the way and, unlike many of them, surrounded by a thick hedge of thorny *lenɔ̱dwa* bush (*Pterolobium exosum*). At the entrance you trip over a slate-coloured river-stone, jutting out a few inches above ground. This is a charm, laid when the village was built, to keep out the witches; it makes them cool, causing them to forget their evil designs. It is part of a more comprehensive scheme for the protection of the village: the gate posts are of special wood (*khirale* or *modutu, Celtis Kraussiana*) smeared with medicines on the day they were set up; round the circumference are medicated pegs (*diphaba*) of *khirale*, the whole being completed by the magic circle drawn by the sister or father's sister, if she is still alive, who drags a 'doctored' branch of thorny *mukhalo* (*Zizyphus mucronata*) round the circumference. If this is not done by her before the doctor begins his work, it must be done subsequently, when the precaution of smearing the soles of her feet with medicine is taken lest by entering she 'opens up a way for witches'. The

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FX14 Lovedu FX14



methods of various doctors are not the same. Sometimes a goat is killed and very often one finds at the entrance to a village a stick, 3–4 ft. long, on which are the roots of a *tititgwani* lily (*Hypoxis villosa*) or pieces of skin of the goat that was killed. This 'medicine of the village', some of which is always kept by the owner, is important for curing certain illnesses caused by witches and may be eaten with the firstfruits. Every year the village needs to be 'awakened' (*hu dzosa mutse*) by the renewal of these protective medicines, a process which Rapaka carries out naked at dead of night by sprinkling round the hedge certain medicine, an ingredient of which is river or sea sand. The river sand has the property of making the village appear as an expanse of water before the eyes of the sorcerer, who thereupon concludes that he has come to the wrong place. A village may have no visible hedge, but the invisible, charmed enclosure is never absent.

On passing through the gate you find yourself in the *khɔrɔ*, an open space, in which there is a hearth. Hardly have you seated yourself on one of the sprawling, spider-like stools of forked branches that are ranged around it than Raselaka himself, who has been expecting you, comes forward. He sits down and, inclining his body to the left, claps his hands, saying, '*Ndau dona*' ('Male lion'). He asks after your health, politely inquires about the journey, and pleasantries are exchanged. According to strict etiquette, he ought to have taken his visitors straight to the chief hut, where guests are received, but he knows you wish to be shown over the village, and perhaps that is why he lingers with you in the *khɔrɔ*. A woman passes, bends both knees in a curtsy and inclines the head, passing one palm slowly over the other, a manner of greeting usual to women; then goes slowly on her way. Soon afterwards, you are overpowered by a most offensive smell. You turn round and discover that she has opened up a grain pit, from the roomy interior of which a small boy, who has let himself in through the narrow neck, is handing out dishfuls of brownish-coloured mealies. Dampness has entered and spoilt the mealies, but the process has not gone far enough to make them uneatable. They are called *madumi* and, though the smell may be unpleasant, there are many who, at least as a change of diet, prefer food made of them to that of ordinary mealies. Many people are already inquiring whether the owner is willing to exchange them. Dotted about the *khɔrɔ* are other pits which can be located by means of a stick, for each is covered with a large, flat stone sealed down with mud. The *khɔrɔ* is the place where the men and boys of the village sit, and where cases may be heard; but it is also the playground of the children. Often when children worry their mothers by shouting or playing in the courtyards, they are told, 'Run away and play in the *khɔrɔ*; this is not your playground.' Many villages to-day have no *khɔrɔ*; they are too small to need one or, where there is a much-neglected space for it, it is not used at all, especially when the men are away at work in town.

To the left of the *khɔrɔ* are a small cattle kraal with wire fence, an enclosure for goats, and another with a roof for donkeys. Only a few villages have cattle at all; but, for most of those that have, a kraal outside the village made of rough poles serves now that there is no longer any

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FX14 Lovedu FX14



legitimate, for men rely upon their labours and place their faith in the rain, the making of which is the prerogative of the queen.

Failure of one's crops is attributed, not to witchcraft, but in a bad year to the heat of the sun and in normal seasons to indolence or bad soil. In the last resort, however, when every one suffers equally, or when there is a major drought, the calamity is regarded as a punishment by the gods, who 'hold the arms of the queen', or by the queen herself, who is displeased in her heart. Diseases and pests are not magical visitations. Though called 'the witch of the mealies' because it saps their strength, witchweed (*Wormskioldia longipedunculata*) is neither sent by witches nor combated by supernatural means. Destructive insects and parasites, such as stalkborers, weevils, and caterpillars, are regarded, not as being 'sent', but as perfectly natural results of untimely planting or unseasonal rain. Birds, monkeys, rats, and mice are, generally speaking, combated by the practical means at the disposal of man, such as trapping or scaring. Numerous other precautions are taken: one does not plant millet unless one's neighbours do likewise, because when there are many fields, all, not merely one, will be at the mercy of predatory birds; people favour bird-proof corns, though they are harder to thresh; late-maturing crops, whatever their productivity, are discarded in favour of those ripening early, because they cannot be reaped before the cattle start their unrestricted grazing; and a much-favoured peanut, which is also easy to reap, is liable to sprout unless special precautions are taken. In short, the problems of agriculture are tackled in a practical manner.

This does not mean that a practical demonstration of the superiority of new methods will always have the desired effect. Agricultural demonstrators have made very little impression. It is often thought that this is due to the improvidence, lack of ambition, and innate conservatism of the 'savage'. A farmer will tell you that, after years of experience on his farm, his Native labourers go home to practise their primitive, wasteful methods. The trouble is not savage incapacity, but the incongruity of our ways, our technology, and our ideals with theirs. The demonstrator is like a teacher speaking a foreign language and working with material and concepts which do not exist in the society. He often is wholly ignorant of the background of belief. His education makes him unduly scornful of savage superstitions, instead of using them to advantage. In agriculture, among the Lovedu, there is one practice we might call superstition. It is *hu upa*, a method of safeguarding crops with medicine against the depredations of birds and monkeys. It is quite harmless, absorbs little of the time or energy of the few children who scatter the medicine, and does not preclude the use of other, more empirical methods. There is no need to waste eloquence upon eradicating a practice which strengthens the interest of the children in agriculture, causes no slackening in their scaring activities from the platforms erected in the fields, and, in the last resort, is an effective psychological device; for it equalizes the struggle of man against nature and maintains at the requisite intensity the confidence which enables him to strive hopefully against his difficulties.

Practical knowledge is undoubtedly the weapon with which demonstrators should combat progressive degeneration in agriculture; but it is

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



with an emotion which, though wholly unlike our humanitarian attitude, finds expression in exaggerated praises. These can be understood only in relation to their immense importance in the social organization.

Lovedu cattle are a blend, it is said, of four different strains: the large, humped Lovedu with backward-curving horns, the small, sturdy long-horned Rhodesian, the small Swazi with incurving horns, and the recent rather nondescript European breeds. In the present environment the mixture has led to inferior scrub cattle, resistent to tick-borne diseases and hardened by the stony hills. There are more cattle to-day than formerly and the distribution is far more equal, but no one believes that dipping has contributed to this result; on the contrary, dipping is regarded as a device to keep down their numbers, to subject the Native to irritating interference, behind which there are sinister motives. Recent attempts by the Administration to improve the breed by introducing thoroughbred Afrikander bulls failed because of these suspicions; the bulls were neglected and no camp was provided for them, and eventually they had to be removed. Cattle of individual owners are listed on so-called cattle lists, which primarily serve as a check upon the efficiency of the dipping; but the lists do not reflect real ownership, for they contain the cattle in a man's kraal, most of which may be merely in his care (*hu fisa*). These lists have considerably altered the incidents of the *hu fisa* contract and other aspects of Native life: they are often illegitimately used as evidence of ownership; orders of Native courts involving payments of cattle are sometimes nullified by the refusal of the owner of the list to authorize the transfer of cattle from his list to that of another; dipping and grazing fees imposed in some parts induce men, on the one hand, to distribute their cattle among different owners so as to keep down the number on any single list and, on the other, to make a charge, unauthorized by custom, for caring for the cattle of others. In short, European intervention has produced as serious changes in pastoral as in agricultural activities. Yet fundamentally the changes have left untouched the real significance and role of cattle in the society.

Cattle are not subject to as many taboos as elsewhere in Southern Africa. Women do not usually herd cattle, but the reason given is that not long ago the dangers from raids and wild animals necessitated herding by armed men; it was regarded as a purely practical measure. Girls or women may herd when the boys are in the circumcision school, and sometimes to-day young girls who have no brothers are seen looking after the cattle. What women may do or may not do varies almost from one kraal to another. Sometimes women of any age may go into the kraals; sometimes the doctor has protected the kraal in such a way that certain classes of women (not necessarily young women) are excluded. There is a fairly uniform fear that the blood of women or a woman who has had an abortion might cause the cattle harm. But the measures to combat these dangers vary very considerably. Kraals are doctored rather than cattle; and they are protected against various dangers, one of them being the danger of women. But elaborate magical practices, elsewhere associated with increasing the fertility of the cattle or safeguarding them

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



against misfortune and disease, are not necessary when a new kraal is built or when the medicated pegs are hammered around the fence as a protection against witches. Some confine their doctoring to the kraals; others, in addition, give the cattle medicine. Bulls are never magically rendered more virile, nor are cows made more attractive by such means. There are to-day hardly any special cattle doctors, and very few cattle diseases are known or subjected to treatment. This is not the result of the breakdown of the cattle cult; it is evidence of the weakness of the cult among the Lovedu. If one were to detail all the magical practices that are to be found, the volume of which would be doubly formidable owing to their diversity, an overwhelming impression might be given; but in true perspective, regarding them against the total background they are almost too insignificant to be noticed.

Far more important from every point of view is the adjustment that Natives are *making* to modern conditions. On this point we can offer merely a few very general suggestions. Foremost is the problem of better co-operation between the Natives and the Administration. The objections to dipping are a symptom of misunderstanding one another's point of view. The Natives regard the restrictions as a punitive and arbitrary imposition. It is useless merely to urge that, by destroying the ticks that cause cattle diseases, dipping promotes both the increase and the welfare of the cattle. No one believes what is regarded as demonstrably false. Any one can see that cattle often die when they come back from the dip; that the rate of calving has decreased, that there are now no milch cows, that stock have degenerated, and so on. These evils are attributed to dipping, not to the hard driving to the dip, poor grazing, and inadequate care. What is more, it is believed that Europeans do not dip and that tribes that are sufficiently cunning escape the dipping regulations. Not a few advance the theory that dipping is a punishment for attachment to and preservation of old customs—surely an ironical comment upon the execution of a policy that aims at segregation and development on the lines of racial genius. The psychological aspects of these problems are no less important than their other aspects; and they are far more difficult and require delicate handling. It is easy to envisage the immediate effects, for instance, of limitation of stock, such as the starvation that will result from insufficient cultivation and the overburdening of the women with agricultural work; but when it is realized that the cattle are barely sufficient to maintain the *munywalo* exchanges upon which the social organization rests, one cannot venture to predict what the ultimate effect of limitation will be.

Goats are the animals *par excellence* of ritual and religious importance. They also feature prominently in exchanges which promote social inter-relations, such as marriage exchanges and the goodwill gifts between relatives-in-law. Second only to beer in re-establishing relations that have become strained, they are used very largely in the procedure of reconciliation, of righting wrongs by begging pardon, and in the payment of judgement debts. When a distinguished guest visits you, you honour him by killing a goat for him; when you bring beer to your *vaduhulu*, the people to whom the daughters of your lineage are married, or even to a

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



friend, they return the compliment by giving you a goat; it is the 'walking-stick' of the old women who brought the beer to her son-in-law, enabling her to go home safely. Goats are dedicated to the gods more frequently than any other animals. A goat is killed at a burial, and its unsalted flesh is eaten. People pay goats to their doctors; they exchange them for mealies. Their skins are still used for making skirts for women and cradles for their babies, whereas cattle hides have no use except for the thongs used in inspanning cattle. Goat's milk, which is never drunk by adults because of its unpleasant odour, is the food of herdboys and girls. All in all, goats play a not inconsiderable part in economic and goodwill exchanges, in legal adjustments, in ritual and religion.

By contrast, sheep, though in the bones of a diviner they represent the men of consequence and goats merely ordinary people, are of no importance whatever. They are very rarely seen on the hills and difficulties connected with dipping have reduced them to a negligible number in the valleys. Fowls are conspicuous everywhere, but only their meat, not their eggs, are eaten. They have recently been introduced by the Shangana-Tonga and even to-day, if found in the capital, are killed and thrown over the hedge. They are never, as among the Shangana-Tonga, used in religious rites. Donkeys, introduced in considerable numbers some thirty years ago, are used in ploughing and for transport, while pigs, also a recent acquisition, figure largely in trading transactions. Pork is not eaten except by men who have worked among Europeans, but the reason is that it nauseates, not so much that it is related to the totem of the tribe. Finally, hunting, as it is to-day, can be dismissed with a reference to the activities of herdboys, who shoot birds with wooden-headed arrows, use birdlime obtained from certain trees, and set various kinds of traps to catch rats, dwarf mongooses, and squirrels.

It is a different matter when we turn to the exploitation of the vegetation. The role that this source of subsistence plays is evident in a thousand ways. It is indeed difficult to give an adequate picture of the manner in which the vegetation enters into all aspects of life and culture. Perhaps, by way of illustration, we may take half a dozen names in order from an alphabetical list of over 500 plants—a small proportion of the flora—which we collected, and note merely a few of the ordinary, well-known uses:

*Muvidividi* (*Ehebergia capensis*). The wood, which is very white and hence much liked, is used for making spoons and bowls; being soft wood, it is also used for milk pails and door boards. To ensure that it will resist weevils to some extent, it is not cut when very young.

*Muvidisa-vyalwa* (*Trichodesma zeylanicum*). In winter, when beer is slow to ferment, the leaves are put into the pot to accelerate the process. The roots, chewed or crushed, are put on wounds to relieve the pain and to heal.

*Muvilo* (*Vangueria floribunda*). Two varieties are distinguished. The primary use is medical and magical, e.g. a branch, first presented to termites and then medicated, is beaten on the temples for migraine; a medicated pole of *muvilo* is placed across gate entrances to keep out witches. For the latter reason, this wood may not be used as firewood; it would reveal the

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



824 manufacturing baskets, sieves and mats; and still another 25 in the hunting activities of boys (arrows, bows, traps, glue.) Over 100 are known more particularly for their edible fruits or roots and 45 are greens or relishes; 230 are well-known in the everyday medical pharmacopœia, and of these 60 are magical. Among other well-known uses are those of the grasses and sedges (15) from which dancing or initiation costumes are made and those (12) connected with games. Some 5 were considered noxious weeds and 8 had certain taboos attached to them. Plants with conspicuous flowers are not specially observed, and one asks the ordinary man in vain as to the name and uses of the more delicate flowering plants; on the whole, he is far better acquainted with trees than with shrubs and grasses, unless used as relishes.

824 What is striking is that the ordinary man regards the flora from a most
● 789 practical point of view. Only a small proportion of the well-known plants have uses which are mainly magical, and knowledge based upon empirical observation overshadows that derived from mystical conceptions. One does not 'doctor' wood to strengthen it against the attacks of termites or woodborers; one selects the proper tree. In 90 out of 100 cases the quality of the wood, not any magical manipulation, is important for the purpose to which it is put, especially if the purpose is economic; and it is in this sense that empirical knowledge is highly developed. Even in the medical
824 sphere, which is predominantly magical, the ordinary man places his
757 faith in the observed action of the herb he uses. The cure may be merely violent internal disturbances, which, in view of the supposed nature of the illness, may be regarded as necessary. The use is not for that reason
[753] magical. Many diseases are conceived to have their seat in the stomach; they are to be thrown out by a purgative; and for them purgatives are
[755] used with a vengeance. Among doctors, of course, all sorts of magical remedies are added; but that is the sphere of the specialist. The ordinary man uses remedies of which the visible effects are empirically related to the disturbances which he conceives to be the causes of the disease.

824 From close observation of the qualities of plants, the Lovedu have
192 arrived at some classification of the flora. They recognize the similarity of plants of the same genus and, if external likeness is a matter of practical interest, there is often a similarity of the word used to designate the various species of the genus. This does not mean that they proceed upon genetic principles; to anatomical similarities in flowers, for instance, they are quite indifferent. If the qualities of two plants of the same genus are to their way of thinking significantly similar, the plants might receive names that are similar; if the qualities are dissimilar, they often know that the two plants are related, though they have different names. The same species modified in its external features by different environments is often given the same name. Species of the same genus are likewise sometimes distinguished by qualifications of the generic name. *Khiphadwa* of the plateau (*kha naha*) is, for instance, *Gymnosporia senegalensis*; *Khiphadwa* of stony places (*kha makhwareni*) is *Gymnosporia buxifolia*. Again, *muduvo*, *muduvatsi*, *muduvatisbi*, and *muduvolisiga*, all containing the root *dum-*, are all species of *Combretum*. On the other hand, *mugovi*, *mukwidi*, and *muhahela thudu* are also species of *Combretum*, but there are

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



166 464 become to interpret economic forces as operating, not *in vacuo*, but against the whole background of social life.

182 157 It is likewise not economic forces alone, but the diffusion of a new outlook that has caused the major changes in the old co-operative system. Individual achievement was of little account; no one was penalized because he attained only a very indifferent standard of efficiency or industry; people were devoted to a non-material ideal. A man's whole upbringing and training conditioned him to the ideal of reciprocity and helpfulness. Yet in the modern world, where personal achievement is important and rivalries must necessarily arise, the life-adjustment value of this ideal is doubtful. To some extent, the individual adapts himself by accepting European standards when he is in town and relaxing from the strain when he has returned home. He comes back mentally tired, and it is recognized that he is entitled to take a long holiday, even though there is pressing work to be done. His failures in town are attributed, not to causes within himself, but to the operation of external forces. His dismissal is ascribed to the jealousy and witchcraft of a competitor for the same position, and the success of his rival to magic. Rivalry is an unfamiliar situation in economic activities at home, and the competitive, individualistic struggle in the towns is never phrased as being between members of the tribe; the magic that is used to oust him from competitive positions or to cause an employer to favour another is always magic used by members of another tribe, such as the Zulu or Xhosa. The Lovedu [789] traditionally regard luck magic with some suspicion, at least as applied in economic situations. But it has become increasingly necessary in order to re-establish their sense of security; a whole new technique of charms, burning medicines to attract custom, chewing roots to give confidence (what the European might call 'effrontery'), and the like has developed. Many invoke, as before a dangerous enterprise in the old days, the blessing of the gods. Even within the tribal economy itself the spread of ideas of competition has been accompanied by the extension of magic and sorcery to new spheres of activity.

476 182 That this answer to contact with the new economy may not always suffice, we see among many neighbouring tribes—for instance, the people of Sekhopo, 'brothers' of the Lovedu. Among them beer, the quintessence of situations of reciprocity and co-operation, is converted into an article of sale. Beer is provided, even at *majema*, as wages, and hence only to the workers; visitors may join the beer-party, but must pay for each calabash they have. This commercialization is deplored by the Lovedu; it is regarded in the same light as charging strangers for board and lodging, a practice that prevails among highveld tribes; and it is almost as bad as what the Lovedu imagine to be the European custom of making relatives who come on a holiday pay their hosts. 'Our hotels are our relatives', said a Lovedu man to us; but while he was prepared to justify the commercial pattern in which salt, meat, tobacco, European vegetables, even money, oust beer in the *lejema*, the sale of beer seemed to him intolerable. This view fairly reflects the general opinion, as well as the attempt to harmonize the two patterns, among the Lovedu. Rewards are sometimes given to individual *lejema* workers, who are

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



and children. Sometimes, in the absence of his brother in town, a man may be consulted by his brother's wife, but he has no real right over her. For a man to beat his brother's wife or order her about, as is said to be the case among Pondo, is quite unheard of. There is nothing special in the relationship between sisters, except that they may marry the same husband, for, quite apart from considerations of the sororate, it is thought at all times good to marry sisters, who will be less liable to make quarrelsome fellow-wives than unrelated girls. Obligations towards classificatory sisters and brothers, children of the mother's sister or father's brother, are not the same as those to brothers by the same father, and the tie is not nearly so close.

Lovedu society is characterized by a very special relationship between brother and sister, a relationship that is given shape to and maintained by the Lovedu pattern of bride-price involving marriage with the mother's brother's daughter and supplemented by the role of women in the religious system. With this are also bound up the close links between two groups of people, the *vamakhulu* and *vafukulu*—a man's own people and those of his mother or wife. The linking of uterine brothers and sisters in pairs, in order that the brother may obtain a wife with the cattle received for the sister, creates this special relationship between them and obliges the man to send his daughter to marry at his sister's place. No man will accept a suitor for his daughter until he has ascertained whether his linked sister wants the girl or not, for though in general it is the sister's son who marries the girl, it is the sister who receives a bride to stamp for her and lessen the labours of her old age. The sister has, in fact, a legal right to the girl. If the girl were to run away or be married to some one else, the court would support the father's sister's claim to the girl or the return of the cattle her brother used. Legally, it is even possible for the sister to dissolve the marriage of her brother by demanding back these cattle, but in practice this is rarely found. It is a common custom for a bridal party to call in at the village of the sister, by means of whose cattle the bride has been obtained, 'to show her the girl who is to bear a bride for her son'. A goat will then be slaughtered by her husband for the bridal party to show their pleasure in the marriage. A value that is constantly being expressed in Lovedu society is that it is fitting and desirable for a girl to 'cook for' her father's sister.

The house of the brother is thought to have been created by the sister whose cattle made the marriage possible. That is why, when he builds a new village, it is the sister who has to draw the magic circle of protection which renders it safe from witches. When the sister visits her old home, it is in the house of this wife that she will 'put her things' and make herself at home and, when she is called to beer, she will be given a special pot in the house of this wife. The sister even wields a certain amount of authority in the house of her brother, as was well illustrated at a gathering we attended where the man of the house was quarrelling with his wife about an uninvited guest. In the midst of the uproar a voice was heard: 'This is my village which I have built. I will have no unseemly behaviour here.' It was the sister rebuking her brother, who subsided immediately and went on with the ceremonial as if nothing had happened. So strong

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



the *nyali* courtyard by their sisters. They are taught a few 'laws' or formulae associated with the *vukwara*, but their main activities are learning to make the elaborately woven costumes and later to dance in the *nyali* courtyard. Towards the end of the initiation they spend most of their time going about to dance, accepting invitations from other district heads and paying their respects at the royal village. They do beautiful movements to the drumming of their own *nyali* girls. Only two dance at a time and, while they dance, attendants (*medabi*) stand near by supervising. The masked boys may whistle out the tune to which they wish to dance or may beg snuff by means of whistling (for this is their only means of conversation during their initiation). When they dance well, women and girls come to give them gifts of leg- or arm-rings. The *vukwara* is a kind of finishing school, an initiation into the secret of what the Bird is and how the costumes are made. It is almost as though this is an esoteric art, the preservation of which has become the main function of the *vukwara*. A person who enters the *vukwara* enclosure may be required to display his skill at weaving and in 1939 a man who was unable to weave (and thus showed himself to be uninitiated) was heavily fined. The fact that there is no *vukwara* held at the royal kraal, whose boys used in the old days to go for this initiation to Khaḓa or to the *Tsuwevi*, a section of the Khaḓa, suggests that the institution is a more recent adoption than the *nyali*.

It is not easy for a European to appreciate the meaning and value of such institutions as *nyali* and *vukwara*. Most of their features cannot be explained by the Lovedu themselves. They are the result of a long, historical development which, in the absence of all evidence, may never be unravelled. The *nyali* has many aspects. One of the most important is that of a crossing or initiation similar to circumcision. The initiates are often called *vawedi* (crossers) and initiation may be referred to as 'to cross over' (*ku n.tla*). It is conceived as a period of hardship, a crossing for which medical treatment and ancestral blessings are essential. Respect for those older than oneself is emphasized: the initiates must be humble; but older people, especially the old men who remain in the Bird's enclosure, live royally on the beer and delicacies brought daily by initiates. There is emphasis, too, on the importance of the rank of district heads and chief, and the learning of praises of all the areas, followed towards the end of the initiation by inter-district visits, is an important feature.

Intermingled with and overshadowing the *nyali* as an initiation is the *nyali* as a fertility and rain cult, related to the *gumana* drum cult and serving the same purpose. The *nyali* lasts a year, a full agricultural cycle, and some of its stages are associated with the seasons: the typical *nyali* dress of the girls cannot be plaited till the grass has grown long; the Bird arrives only when there is plenty of food. The singing of *nyali* songs is believed to bring rain. Even before the rains of the summer of 1938–9 had fallen, it was said in Lovedu that the year would be one of plenty on account of the *nyali*. These expectations were more than realized, for not only was the summer rainy, but even the winter, which is normally dry, was exceptionally wet. Stress is laid in the *nyali* on grass and vegetation: the girls wear plaited bandoliers of grass which are said by

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



some to render them fertile; the *digoma* are almost all made of grasses, reeds, or leaves; the remarkable *vuhwera* costumes are made of various special kinds of grass; and on one of the most important excursions made by the *vyali* girls, called *vuiglwi* (at the locusts), they are made to collect the bark of various kinds of trees. The *vyali* as a fertility rite is most clearly seen in the sexual intercourse at the order of the Bird which used to be indulged in towards the end of the initiation on the approach of spring. The true meaning of the Bird is difficult to discover, though it is significant that it is associated with moonlight, comes from a pool, and declares on its departure that it will leave mists behind it. In one praise song of the Bird it appears to be referred to as *vaglaja*, the ancestral spirits: 'I have heard you, Bird of ours and Rahufa of Muhale. The father of giving has gone, O *vaglaja*. There remain only things for which one must pay' (*Gi hu phulaphudz nomi yesu le vuRahufa a Muhale rahufa khi ile, vaglaja, hu sadz kha muthego ftla*). This Bird, *goma* of the old men, is related to the *gomana* cult, using the same method of whistling through an instrument.

The Lovedu appear to have borrowed *vyali* and *vuhwera* and the *gomana* drum cult from neighbours. Some elements, like *vuiglajani*, have become firmly embedded in a number of institutions; others, like *vuhwera*, are looked upon more as entertaining appurtenances without any very serious meaning beyond that of giving pleasure. But the sacred drum cult clashes to some extent with the rain cult of the queen and there is little doubt that to this fact one must partly attribute the failure to beat *gomana* drums in recent years.

The rule about physical fitness is now merely an old one, similarly, ritual suicide is not conceived to have any relation to the welfare of the country. People do not say that the country will suffer if the physical powers of the queen fail. But ritual suicide does elevate the queen to a divinity; only by her act, not because of susceptibility to the weaknesses of man, can she die. Age neither increases nor decreases her powers. She is the 'soil'; her death 'heals' or 'dries up' the soil in the double sense of defiling it (as twins do) and scorching it (as the sun does); and as they phrase it, the 'country dies with its owner'. Consequently, after the queen's death, famines come, cattle and people succumb, and many flee the country. When Mujaji II committed suicide in 1894, there followed the *matakona*, the three years of unprecedented drought and pests, during which, according to contemporary European observers, practically all the cattle and a third of the population died. After the death of Mugodo, likewise, there was a great famine. The only other famine vividly recorded by tradition was during the reign of a chief who, being a usurper, was unable to make rain. Though the death of a chief presages death of the country, there is no great hurry to appoint a new queen. To the unfolding of a plan that guarantees abundance, immediate needs, even the need for the life-giving rain, must be subordinated.

For an account of succession to the throne we have to rely upon the memories of men who were adults forty-five years ago. The practical and the ideal are confused in their minds. The generalized account we give is thus not specifically related to the death of Mujaji II unless otherwise indicated. Shortly before her death, the queen calls together her great men, sits silently looking at them for a while, and then retires to her hut. She will not see again the young boys who have gone to the *vadigo*. Long before this, Mujaji II and her inner 'council' had named the daughter of Leakhali, who was her 'sister' and great wife, as successor; she had driven both mother and daughter with their brothers from the country, but was secretly receiving and instructing the daughter. None but a small circle of close relatives knew of these arrangements; and a little later she took poison (*khitaba*) in which the fatal ingredients are said to be the brain and spinal cord of the crocodile. There is a rule that the killer of a crocodile is for ever debarred from entering the capital, a prohibition patterned upon the taboos against bringing into a village the wood of trees with which shrines and protective charms (*dithugula*) are made, for these trees 'reveal', and so render useless, what they create. The poison is not conceived to kill instantaneously; the queen dies in the presence of those who know the secrets, but the death is not made public. Those who pass the royal hut still greet her; even cases are still submitted as if for her final decision. Deception of the people is the aim emphasized in descriptions and in phraseology. In the old days many cattle were killed 'to deceive the people', but neither this killing, which provided at least for the funeral feast and the skin for the dead body, nor the other arrangements, had this function only. The spirit of the deceased continues, as it were, to preside over the country and no one could take over the reins of government.

The body decomposes, it is ritually rubbed (*ku fwola*) to remove skin

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

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and dirt for the vital ingredient of the rain medicine, and after a while close relatives secretly dig a grave at Maulwi, the place where to-day the sacred drums are also kept. The grave is deep, for the queen must stand upright, 'taking care' of her country, and facing to the north, whence her ancestors came. The body is wrapped in a greenish-black cloth, a portion still of what was brought from the north, and over it is wound the skin of an ox. The hearse proceeds from the village secretly at night, and, as the great must rest, the bearers stop every few yards. Sacred beads, a calabash of water, a firebrand, the grains upon which people live and (in the old days) the body of a man, the 'mat' of the chief, are interred with the queen. The calabash and firebrand, used also to expel a usurper, provide the essentials for the 'journey' to be undertaken. A slab of stone covers the mouth of the grave and facilitates the re-opening whenever rain medicine (*mufugo*) is to be poured into it. The grave is not all at once filled up with soil; it is guarded against enemies, who might destroy the country with the medicine the body provides; and it is said that a wooden structure, on which the watchers sleep, is built over the grave. The soil at last reaches the neck, but the head must be left uncovered for perhaps six months, until it has completely decomposed.

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A year later the district heads are assembled at the capital, the death is announced and the drum beaten, and people shave their heads. It is said that foreigners entered the country at the peril of life and belongings. When the hair has grown and the mourning period ends, all fires in the country are put out. This same fire-rite figures, as far as a district is concerned, at the installation of its head, and as far as the whole country is concerned, when all-pervasive impediments to rain are removed. It essentially consists—we have described it briefly in Chapter XV—of putting out fires with medicine (*mufugo*) by boys who receive the medicine at the capital, and of a chain of payments, by the women to the married men for the firebrand obtained from the *khovo* to re-light their fires, by the men to the boys for their services in the rite, and by the boys to the official keeper of the *mufugo* at the capital. Two distinctive patterns are explicit in this rite: fire in its aspect of a valuable commodity and as almost the prerogative of the chief, to whom his subjects must pay a royal 'fire tax'; and fire in its aspect of giving out deleterious 'heat', which must be counteracted by 'cooling' with *mufugo* (*ku fuga*, to blow upon by a cool breeze, to sprinkle with 'cooling' medicine).

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Fire also belongs to a third pattern which links it up with crises or great changes, ritualizes its value, and uses it to extinguish an evil or to purify a state of defilement. In their present cultural connotation among the Lovedu, these three patterns are implicit in the nature of fire, but they do not always merge in ritual situations, and, as far as the evidence of the cultures of the Northern Transvaal go, they belong to different cultural configurations. This evidence seems to indicate that the 'royal tax', through which authority is asserted and acknowledged, came from the Karanga, that the association with purification and 'transitions' was borrowed from the old Sotho, and that the conception of 'heat' as the antithesis of health of body and well-being of the country, was contributed by a wider and less easily determinable culture substratum. The

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



significance of the fire rite at the accession of a queen can be understood only in the context of the three patterns as they have been integrated into Lovedu culture and become merged in the rite.

Firstly, fire figures in the borrowed 'transition' rites, but not in the girls' puberty rite (*khoba*). Midway in the sacred fire of the boys' circumcision (*vudiga*) is its central shrine at the place where the chief initiate (*mashe*) sits. In the sanctum of the Bird of the *vyali* there is an undying fire. The end of these 'schools' is spoken of as 'a burning down' (*hu tsa*): the fire destroys all the distinctive things of the 'school', the lodge, the tables, the tiniest bits of grass that fell from the dancing performers, and, as the lodge burns, the initiates, turning their backs upon it, may not look round and are irrevocably severed from their past. Again, when 'the country is not right' and has to be re-established or purified of its pollution with 'cooling' medicine (*mufugo*), a transition is implied, for it is said, 'The fires are put out to usher in a new year'. The same conception reappears when *mufugo* is used before the accession of a new queen.

Secondly, the firebrand, as the symbol of authority, figures in the warrant (*khiso*, i.e. firebrand) given by the queen which authorizes district heads to hold 'schools'. This warrant of authority is most strikingly evident in the firebrand and calabash handed to a disaffected noble or would-be usurper as an intimation that he is expelled from the country. It has merged with the *mufugo* rite enacted to render the earth receptive to the power of rain magic or to herald the accession of a queen; and here it takes the form of a 'royal tax' vicariously exacted through the women, their husbands, the boys sprinkling the medicine, and the keeper of the *mufugo* at the capital.

Thirdly, 'beating out' of fires with 'cooling' medicine belongs to a complex of rites for counteracting the harmful effects of 'heat', a conception explained in Chapter XII. 'Heat' not only arises from the contamination of death, but is the concomitant of disease, weakens the charms (*dithugula*), impedes rain, and defiles the earth. In all these cases it is combated with 'cooling' medicine, as we describe elsewhere. In addition, the *gona* drums are prevented from losing their concentrated power by the 'cool' river stones in them, witches are thwarted by protective charms (*diphaba*) in which the products of the sea are the most powerful elements, and the 'heat' of the ancestors' anger is 'cooled' with *mufugo*. The death of a queen 'dries up' or 'heats' the whole country, which has to be cooled as a preparation for the new ruler.

Thus in the fire rite at a queen's accession, the culture is handling complicated and all-important conceptions. The pervasive evil corrupting the country must be neutralized; the relationship of ruler and ruled, superior and inferior, must be visibly reasserted; and there must be enacted a momentous new start marking the inception of a new destiny and preparing the universe for the reception of the next rain-maker. The fire rite on this occasion symbolizes a mighty purification and 'transition', epitomizes the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen, and inaugurates a cosmic order in which the magic of a new rain-maker may be auspiciously manifested. That, in the Lovedu cultural context, is the meaning of the fire rite.

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



queen's mother—that is, either the queen's predecessor on the throne or, if she has borne no children, the queen's physiological mother. The unofficial husbands of the queens are brothers chosen from the line of Malegudu (elder brother of Mujaji I), but relationship is not reckoned through them as fathers. Closeness of relationship is important, but personality and opportunity count as much. The most influential councillor is often said to be the queen's mother's brother—in other words, the brother of the deceased queen or, if she has no issue, the brother of the wife of the queen who bore the queen. In fact, however, other relatives rise to equally influential positions. To take a concrete instance, the councillors of Mujaji III have been relatives either through Leakhali, chief wife and 'sister' of Mujaji II and physiological mother of Mujaji III, or through Mujaji II, her mother, Mujaji I, and the latter's brothers, such as Malegudu. Muneri, the chief councillor to-day, is Leakhali's uterine brother's son, and before him there were Mulogwane, uterine brother of the queen, and also Leakhali's uterine brother. Earlier still, but in the present queen's time, the greatest councillors were others tracing descent from Malegudu. There is no precise rule either as to the number or identity of the councillors. The *duna* of the queen should not be a relative; he is merely a messenger, and, unlike the *induna* elsewhere, is of no account, having no special legal or other status or function.

The *khivij*ɔ is neither the more or less determinate body of private advisers (*kxotla*), nor even the tribal gathering (*pitshɔ*), of the Sotho. It is mainly constituted by district heads, or their representatives, and the men of the capital, but any one attends; and it is never conceived of as a general assembly of all the initiated men of the tribe. It has little power and less initiative; it is summoned mostly to discuss European matters, and there is now a tendency to place some decisions of the men of the capital before it for confirmation; but it is hardly a means of gauging popular feeling or of expressing the royal will. The co-operation of the tribe is secured and its desires made known, not through the *khivij*ɔ, but through other social arrangements, which we shall describe at greater length.

These arrangements run parallel with a distinctive system of wives of the queen, called *vafazomi*, a term also applied to the wives of all nobles and women other than the queen may have *vafazoni*. The majority of the queen's wives are given to her by her district heads. In a sense, these wives are tribute (*va ku losa*), but the queen always gives some *munywalo*. She also receives wives from foreign chiefs who supplicate for rain or for peace, and from headmen who settle in her country and send their daughters or sisters; in these cases no *munywalo* is given. Finally, she is sent wives by the nobles, by those to whom she has given wives or cattle with which to secure wives, and by those who promise their little 'mud-stampers' as repayment for the assistance they ask. Sometimes also the queen takes a liking to a girl and asks her in marriage and sometimes commoners send their daughters. It will be impracticable to deal with all these cases; and, from the point of view of the political organization, we are mainly concerned with the wives sent by district heads. They send their daughters for purposes of *ku losa*, a word used in a wide

[marriage cattle, See cat. 583 for detail.—Analyst]

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



643 588 634 789 648 connotation, including the conceptions of showing allegiance, doing homage, paying tribute, honouring, but, above all, supplicating for rain. District heads *lova* in this way, it is said, in recognition of the land which the queen has given them to rule; but what is really important is their dependence, as holders of land of the queen, upon the protection and security of her rain-making powers. Vuloedu, her country, is the land where persons (i.e. wives) and other possessions are utterly lost (*hu lova*), because they are given in exchange for the rain that the queen makes. The queen has accepted wives even from the Shangana-Tonga, with whom marriage is not permitted, but in that case she hands them to her nobles, not as wives, but as daughters; and after a time they become sufficiently Loveduized to be given in marriage to commoners. These wives usually stay at the capital for a limited time; only a few of them, some six to nine to-day, remain permanently; the others are handed chiefly to district heads and nobles.

643 588 While the wives are at the capital they do the work that wives ordinarily do: they hoe for their husband, the queen, who sometimes accompanies them to the fields, they attend to domestic duties, they stamp and brew beer, but only two or three of them are sufficiently noble and trusted to cook for the queen. The queen is bridegroom to their people and they are her relatives-in-law; and even the details of the marriage ceremony are maintained. There are variations upon the ordinary pattern of [831] marriage and *munywalo*; the *munywalo*, for instance, is less, but what is particularly stressed is the virginity of the bride. For a time she wears only a loin cloth as evidence that she is not pregnant and a substitute must be sent for a girl who has been 'spoilt' before marriage with the queen. The first daughter of the district head of Mulloni was 'engaged' to the queen, the second to her cross-cousin, a nobleman. The fiancée of the queen became pregnant and was rejected, the queen arranging an exchange with the nobleman. The same nobleman years ago had been 'given' a wife by the queen and recently in return, as is obligatory, he sent his daughter as wife to the queen. This daughter became pregnant, was allotted to another nobleman, whom she deserted, and now stays with her father nursing an infant of two years of age. Such complications merely throw into relief the ramifications of the system.

643 588 837 554 The queen does not accept 'spoilt' brides and she equally expects that her wives shall remain chaste, at least for a time. Theoretical insistence upon chastity co-exists with a realistic attitude to the weaknesses of human nature. Seduction of a wife of the queen is penalized as if she were still unmarried and the daughter of the queen. Pregnant wives, unless the queen has authorized the liaison, are disgraced, sent home, and returned with beer to wipe out the disgrace, and sometimes an ox is slaughtered for the returned wife, the peritoneum being hung round her neck to indicate that she is the queen's wife. According to the standards of the society, the seducer, as in any ordinary case of seduction, may not marry the woman he has seduced; he may not even see his infant child. Few of the wives of the queen permanently remain chaste, though it is a great honour often very specially rewarded. The great wives, if they remain chaste, may be given areas to rule or special villages of their own.

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



753 after the funeral. *Makhuma* also affects possessed people who fail to use their powdered medicine with the first-fruits.

Though usually associated with the stomach, the symptoms of *makhuma* are not very definite, diagnosis being chiefly *ex post facto*. If one child has died, any illness its successor might have, even beating of the fontanelle, is liable to be attributed to *makhuma*. After the miscarriage of Madume's wife, Dwagu, a non-related inmate of the same village, did not trouble to be purified when the doctor came; but when, shortly afterwards, his stomach became upset, he immediately attributed it to *makhuma* and hastened to take medicine for its removal.

[787] The conception of *khuma* has been extended into other fields. Divining bones *khuma* at the end of each month as well as when used to divine about a death, and must be washed in medicine before being used again. [789] Similarly the rain charms of the queen are liable to *khuma* (or *figɛhcla*) unless given the first-fruits and the first termites of the year to 'bite' (*luma*) before any one else in the royal area eats them, as also when certain people neglect certain observances, such as burial in wet soil of infants dying before their teeth have appeared. *Hu khuma* of the rain charms has serious consequences, causing drought throughout the country. That Christians do not observe these regulations has as little effect on the rain as when Europeans do not conform.

753 826 *Hu fesa*, or the state of being 'hot', is a conception far wider than *muridi* or *makhuma* and is the antithesis of the condition of coolness which is conceived of as healthy, propitious, or right. The properties of this 'heat', which may be caused in a variety of ways, are not unlike physical heat. Bodily illness, even *muridi*, causes the blood to be 'hot' or to be 'boiling' and may be treated by 'cooling' the body: thus the *khitshila* ceremony, which removes the 'dirt' of death, also 'cools' people. The hair of near relatives is shaved with medicine and put in a wet place or in certain kinds of drought-resisting plants. But it is usually the source of the 'heat', not the 'heat' itself, the symptom of the disease, that is treated, though both may be dealt with. The blood of a woman in certain conditions—for example, after an abortion—is said to 'burn', she has (or is) *lesua* (great burning), and the man who has sexual intercourse with her also 'burns', but whether it is because the 'heat' is conducted to him or because of the disease, *ɖɛre* (coughing illness) or urethritis, which he contracts, is by no means clear. The treatment is directed at the disease in him, not towards counteracting the 'heat'. Often after steaming a patient, a river stone is pressed against all joints of the body and then taken back to the river, a treatment in which we may discern an attempt to 'cool', though it also contains the conception of 'throwing out'.

821 766 Since heat withers the vegetation and causes drought, it is opposed to rain. Precautions must therefore be taken against whatever is thought to cause the country to be hot and dry. A man succumbing to *ɖɛre*, a person struck by lightning, a woman dying in childbirth, and the foetus of a miscarriage—all these must be buried in wet soil or with rain medicine if the country is to be kept 'cool' and the rains are to fall. Coolness connotes rightness. Charms protecting the village against witches are 754 sometimes called *mashɔthɔjɔ*, because they *rɔthɔja* (cause to be cool,

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



immediate and usually not consciously phrased, yet in the total complex of the culture all things are interconnected, albeit in ways that are not easy to see clearly. The gods help good and bad men alike, they send illness whether one is careful or neglectful of the observances due to them, and the after-life is the same for all. But we should be careful not to deduce too much from this. The position of a sister and her privileges are sanctioned by the gods, as is also the respect due to old people. In general the gods are not upholders of custom, yet on one occasion in 1937 two *zwidjani* cried all day in the bush at Maulwi because some women had broken the taboo against cutting wood there. The chief concern of the gods appears to be to look after their own interests. They complain when they dislike the manner of their burial, but they are undisturbed when twins are not buried in wet soil, even though this has a disastrous effect on the whole country. If they were disturbed about custom in general, instead of things directly affecting them, they would complain of many disturbing changes in these days of culture contact; instead, one only finds that possessing spirits dislike European things and that at offerings European utensils are generally not used.

Another outstanding characteristic is the almost entire absence of any speculative element. The Lovedu are not concerned with such things as the life hereafter and the mode of life of the gods; theirs is essentially a practical religion in which rites are of far greater importance than attitude of mind, action than belief. Its rites are directed to practical ends, such as recovery from illness and the procuring of rain. In vain does one inquire into the meaning or reason of a rite, for the reply always is, 'The bones tell us to do these things,' and the practical end is phrased as determined by the bones. There are considerable differences from one family to another in the conduct of religious rites and the nature of shrines and, since religion is primarily a family concern, few people know what their neighbours do. Not uncommonly one finds a practice said to be impossible by some people accepted as normal by their neighbours.

Lovedu religion is not distinct from magic. The very terminology of the two is identical: *thugula* is a shrine, dedicated animal, or a sacred object once in the possession of the ancestors, but it is also any charm of bone or herbs concocted by a doctor. *Diphaba* are used in shrines or offerings to make the ancestors forget, as well as to ward off witches from the village. *Hu rerelela* means both to pray and to utter a spell. *Hu phasa* is used both to approach the gods and with medicines when sending back disease to a witch; one may also *phasa* on the charms in the village gate on the arrival of beer in order that more may come to the village. In a sacrifice for rain, the magical rites are of as great importance as the purely religious; and *hu phasa* in case of illness is thought to have a compelling force. It cannot fail; if it does, there must be some other cause, for an ancestor can never refuse to be placated by the *phasa* rite.

The merging of religion with magic and medicine is everywhere evident, but nowhere is it more prominent than in the cult of possession. This cult is not indigenous; it came with the Thovolo and, since its first reception some thirty years ago, has gained considerable popularity.

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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Doctors frequently 'try' one another by sending lightning. A lightning witch may either fly himself or may smear medicine on a dove or a red-winged locust which, when it thunders, is able to 'go with the lightning' and strike where its owner wishes. Use of the lightning bird itself for this purpose is impossible. A man who himself strikes as lightning must be scarified with medicine containing some portion of the lightning bird, and when learning to strike may be taken to a high desolate place where he is taught accuracy by being required to strike one of a number of aloes in a row. An informant once saw a man with black-and-white stripes all over his body and two branches tied to his hips; he concluded that this must be a lightning witch (*cf.* the striped hyena with its mane of upright hair on neck or along back, or the striped polecat, which bristles up its tail in anger). One who controls lightning is able to prevent it from striking him by cutting or piercing the flash with a medicated axe or spear, telling it to go elsewhere. Lightning frequently strikes villages and people in Uulovedu and in many instances some accusation is brought before the court. Huts may be magically protected against lightning. If a witch strikes a protected village, it is believed that he will 'fall', change into a person, and can then be caught. There are no taboos against milking or working during lightning, but the day after it has struck the whole district has a holiday.

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Day-witches use several other techniques. A very common form of day-witchcraft is *hu lesa* (to cause to eat), the introduction of medicine into beer or food, which on being swallowed turns into an indigestible piece of meat or other object that makes one ill. Most people one meets have at some time or other suffered from *khileso*. To pour real poison into food (*hu shɛla khitaba*) is a modern though still very uncommon method of killing. *Hu fahɛlɛja* (*hu fa*, to die, *hu ɛlɛja*, to cause to go for) is to cause a person to leave home, e.g. for European employment, and die far away. This is done chiefly by day-witches, but also sometimes by night-witches; it is, however, neither common nor well-known. Modern conditions, with increased tribal contacts in European towns, have led to a tremendous increase in day witchcraft. New methods and medicines for *hu lega*, unknown in the tribe before, are being introduced. Some even go so far as to say that the sending of lightning is a relatively recent thing from Nareni.

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There are many practices bordering on witchcraft, indistinguishable from day-witchcraft in technique and method of procedure, but considered legitimate and therefore not witchcraft in the true sense. Some of these are so close to, that they are sometimes looked upon as witchcraft. The deciding factor in such cases is always the result: if it causes death it is witchcraft; if it does not, or if it is done with an object that is recognized as legitimate, it is not witchcraft. *Hu dabɛka* is essentially legitimate. Its technique consists in changing the nature of things, making medicated pieces of the skin of an animal turn into the animal itself, changing a person's sex, and one of the best-known doctors in Loveduland is skilled in *madabi*. It is a technique confined to men, employed to make a woman marry you or to frighten her into coming back to you when she has run away. No one has ever heard of a woman sending

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754 *madabi*.[1] A woman ran away from her husband to live with another.
789 Whenever she was cooking or doing her household duties at her new home, monkeys and other animals appeared at the village till, frightened out of her wits, she ran back to her first husband. *Madabi* are often sent [845] in connexion with childbirth. Sometimes the sending of *madabi* is looked upon as witchcraft. Malaji changed the sex of Muhali's daughter so as to make the birth difficult each time she was about to bear a child, because the child was his, but the girl no longer loved him. We were not allowed into the hut, but the midwives, whom we knew well, testified to a real change, though probably because certain types of difficult birth are conventionally so explained. Eventually the birth took place, but shortly afterwards the baby was dead. This was considered to be witchcraft, the case was brought to court, and a large fine imposed. Only the doctor who used *madabi* can undo or reverse its power by *hu dabekulla*, but other doctors may, if there has been any injury, heal it with medicines.

789 A practice similar to *madabi*, but differing from it in object is *maḍilebɔ*. At the time of the Swazi raids, Raŋwagu, instead of hiding in the forests, put his faith in *maḍilebɔ* (marvel, wonder). When the enemy came, his village turned into water and they could not find his cattle, though they heard their lowing. Masia, who was wanted by the police during the whole period of our investigation, was able, when chased by them, to disappear even in the open; he would hang like a bat on a plough to look just like a spanner. When eventually he was arrested, he averred, and many people agreed, that it was because he was tired.

*Khidɔba* is a technique used against thieves and it is both public and legitimate. Some kinds of *khidɔba* are known as a home remedy; some are obtained from doctors. By means of medicine used on *ledzigeri* grass [824] (*Hyparrhenia Tamba*), one can cause a severe and painful itching in the finger of the thief which may compel him to confess. Likewise, by *hu dɔba*, a stolen goat may be made to cry out in the thief's belly, as happened in a recent case, probably of compulsion neurosis, in which bleating was taken as conclusive proof of his guilt. Another method of *hu dɔba* causes the eyes of the thief to protrude till they fall out on to his stomach; if his mother then cries on seeing him, he may die. *Khidɔba* strikes the thief even when he hides or sells the stolen goods. Besides these measures, taken to bring a thief to book after the theft, one may by anticipation pro- [824] tect one's property by means of a piece of *leṭaṭe* rush (*Mariscus sp.*) split at one end to resemble the mouth of a snake and smeared with coloured medicines. When placed at the hut entrance or on the border of your field, it turns into a snake and bars the entry or exit of a thief. A doctor we knew used to have serious talks with his son about the fortune he would make if he knew this medicine, especially in Johannesburg, where theft is common and victims pay high prices. The only recognized cure

[1] The word comes from *dalo* plus *inbi*; *dalo* (well being), is a noun from *hu lala* (to lie down, to be peaceful), and *inbi* means bad. *Dabi* should be calamity, but it is used only in the sense of excessive rain (causing evil). The plural, *madabi*, means misfortune or pain or disease legitimately 'sent'. The verb is *hu dabɔka*, legitimately to send misfortune, and its converse, *hu dabekulla*, means to neutralize or remove the effects of *madabi*.

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of the power and effect of *hu dɔba* is by asking for pardon, when the doctor who gave or used the *khidɔba* will be asked to *dɔbulla*, i.e. reverse the effects of his medicine. He will usually charge a large fee (even an ox), which he shares with his client.

Use of medicine on a grave which causes the death, not only of the witch who killed the deceased, but also of other members of his family is not considered to be witchcraft. This is called *hu tsikɛla* or *hu dicla leviḍa* (to work on the grave) and is done in various ways: the corpse may be smeared before burial, or the seed of a certain plant from Rhodesia sown on the grave, and when it grows the witch will die, or medicine and the stomach contents of a goat may be poured down a hole to reach the body in its grave. This is the usual sense in which *hu tsikɛla* is used, but sometimes it is conceived of as a kind of *hu dɔba*, against a thief with the purpose of wreaking vengeance, not only on him, but also on all those who have eaten of the thing stolen, whether they are innocent strangers or guilty accomplices. It kills, unlike *hu dɔba*, which merely injures. As in *khidɔba*, this form of *hu tsikɛla* is more or less public, for the villagers and neighbours must be previously informed, so that they will have an opportunity to confess. The other and more usual form of *hu tsikɛla* is directed against witches who are murderers and for that reason it is not public, for it is conceived that the witch might take counter measures or bribe a bad doctor to 'call back' the medicine. It may be sent to a definite person discovered by consultation with the bones, but the name of the person will not be mentioned in the spell lest the witch take counter measures. The spell is not in set terms, but it usually runs as follows: 'You Mufuba (the deceased in the grave whose death is to be avenged), we are to-day working on your grave. We call all those who killed you to follow you to the grave. We do not say only one of them. We mean all who are of them [the whole family]. Do you also call them, so that all of them should follow you.'

A death is sometimes ascribed by the bones to *hu tsikɛla*; and in one case the suicide of a girl, who was said to have bewitched her husband's people, was found to have been caused by such medicine. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is possible for a witch, who gets a doctor to *tsikɛla* for him, to be struck down by the medicine intended for another. It is curious that, though he knows that the medicine seeks out the true witch, he will risk such a procedure, but the explanation is that, though a doctor might be deceived—his bones confused by the witch's medicine (*khiŋalaŋaga*)—the medicine cannot be, and that the fatal effect of *hu tsikɛla* is diagnosed *ex post facto*. Thus in one case where a woman died, her sister went to a *tsikɛla* specialist; but subsequently the sister herself and some of her relatives died. When a great *mugɔme* was consulted, he said that the sister had sent *mutsikɛla* to people whom she hated and that, not finding the murderer there, it returned and struck down the sender. *Mutsikɛla* will continue its deadly effects unless 'stopped' by the doctor who sent it, though there is a medicine (*lesɛlo*) which may be eaten by all those who think they are in danger of vengeance-magic to neutralize its effects. It is recognized that the witch may retaliate in the case of vengeance-magic, though this is considered unusual and almost always ineffectual.

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754 832 789 There are many other specialized techniques, but for our purposes it will suffice to refer briefly to love-magic. Love-medicine was not known to the Lovedu, and its use is generally said by the older people to be witchcraft. Nevertheless, this magic, introduced from the towns, where, especially among Zulu and Xhosa, it is common, is used by many young men in Vulovedu to-day. One method, scarification of the forehead or use of medicine in your snuff, makes all the girls love you; blowing a medicated pipe of the *mukhure* shrub (*Ricinus sp.*) morning and evening, while calling the name of a certain girl, will make her come to you soon; and there are various other medicines. Love-magic to cause hysteria in girls is known as a Zulu practice, but is not used in Vulovedu. It would be looked upon as witchcraft.

754 761 These borderline methods, sometimes called witchcraft, sometimes not, and often referred to as 'good' *vuɔi*, bring us to a consideration of what constitutes *vuɔi*. All witchcraft is socially disapproved, anti-social, but this criterion is not always sufficient to distinguish between witchcraft proper and practices bordering on witchcraft. Swearing at people, or scolding them violently, when the cause hardly justifies it, is liable to call down upon them forces which lead to death or misfortune to them or their family. It is called *lesola* and is reprehensible; but it is not *vuɔi*; nor is *mahava*, illness caused by the ill-feeling of a father's sister or other relative. The conduct of a woman who, having had an abortion, causes her husband's death through neglecting to give him the medicine necessary to ward off such disaster is strongly disapproved of, but it is not witchcraft, even though it causes death.

Since many borderline practices are judged by their result and become witchcraft when they cause death, it might be argued that this criterion must be distinctive. It is, however, not enough; causing death to a husband by abortion is, as we have seen, not considered to be witchcraft, nor is the murderous *khigevɛgwa* a witch, even though he secretly kills people at night and sells parts of their body to doctors. Furthermore, many accusations of witchcraft have arisen where there has been no death, but only sickness or loss by lightning. The only difference between the killing by a *khigevɛgwa* and that by a witch lies in the method employed. The killer uses ordinary weapons; the witch kills by means of medicine or some peculiar powers not known to ordinary people. The distinguishing feature of all cases of witchcraft is the use or supposed use of medicine or witch-power. Intent is another feature by which one judges an action. Where a woman causes the death of a husband through abortion, her conduct is anti-social and the act is done in secret, but it differs from witchcraft proper in the absence of intent to kill. Fear of the consequences of adultery is the main force deterring her from correct behaviour; and it is argued that, if she really wishes to kill she need not employ so round-about a method.

754 The conclusion we may draw is that, for an action to be witchcraft, it must satisfy, not one, but all the following three requirements: it must be disapproved of, anti-social; there must be an intent to kill or to harm; and it must be thought that either medicine or the mysterious forces of night-witchcraft have been used. Secrecy is not peculiar to witchcraft; it is

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# CHAPTER XV

## THE RAIN CULT

**The rain-queen in her sphere of safeguarding the seasons—technique of transforming the clouds—evils that cause 'heat' and act as impediments to rain—'cooling' rites counteracting the 'heat' of the earth.**

As the centre of the agricultural cycle, rain is the focus of many human interests; as the elixir of life, it is one of the ultimate bases of man's sense of security; and as a manifestation of celestial grace, it is the supreme justification of the divine right of the queen to rule. The queen is primarily not a ruler, but a rain-maker, and men rely for their security, not on regimentation, armies, and organization, but on the queen's power to make rain for the tribe and to withhold rain from its enemies. All ultimate reliances are based upon the magico-religious world, and rain-making and its cult are an important part of that world. The rain cult is not composed of a few magical passes made by the queen; it is a whole complex of institutions with ramifications through many aspects of tribal life. The cult is not confined to measures taken to secure rain in times of drought; its observances must be kept at all times and a good year involves as much care on the part of the queen as a bad one.

The chief actor in the rain cult is the queen. During life, she is not merely the Transformer of the Clouds, but she is regarded as the changer of the seasons and guarantor of their cyclic regularity; when she dies, the seasons are out of joint and drought is inevitable. Her very emotions affect the rain: if she is dissatisfied, angry, or sad, she cannot work well, and in 1934–5, when the first rains did not come till December, the drought was attributed to her being upset at her daughter's liaison with a commoner. Her rain-making is not confined to dramatic ceremonies in time of severe drought; it is conceived of as continuous care throughout the summer. Furthermore, the Lovedu do not attribute every fall of rain to some special activity or volition on the part of their queen, but rather believe that the queen exercises some general control or care which ensures a good season.

Such being the powers of the queen, she is the person to be approached when there is no rain, not only at the beginning of the season, but any time during the summer in a country in which three weeks' drought might ruin the maize crop. There are various ways of doing this. Great councillors or important relatives may approach the queen in person, saying, 'The people are crying,' and asking her to help them. When there was no rain, Mugwena, related to the queen through his mother, used to walk near the queen's hut complaining, in a voice calculated to reach the royal ears, that it was a bad thing for the chief to kill his people by withholding rain. When the first summer storm of 1937 opened with much lightning and thunder, the two chief councillors mentioned informally to the queen at beer that they hoped she would ward off wind and thunder and give them a good year. Heads of districts approach the queen (*ku loma*) with a gift, usually nowadays of £1 or £1 10*s*., and very often

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643 789 535 821 bring with them in addition dancing performers (*gɔsha*) to please her and to evoke her pity at the sorrowful sight of people dancing in summer when they ought to be ploughing. The movements of this dancing do not differ from those of ordinary dancing, but the music consists of *lesugu* songs sung also at the annual harvest ceremony, on the death of important royal people, and at the girls' initiation 'school'.

643 789 535 533 821 The most renowned of all dancing for rain is the *legɔbathɬle*, a special kind of *gɔsha*, the mourning dance of a section of Thɔvɔlɔ people living under one of the district heads, Mavulana. It is more dignified, its movements slower and more stately, and its drumming more subdued than in an ordinary *gɔsha*. So lightly are the drums struck that the clear, silvery, varied tones of the reed pipes ring out like the peal of bells. Only two drums are used, and none but those who have lost at least one parent may perform, and it is begun in the dim light of the dawn before sunrise, when, after a short spell, it stops and is resumed later in the day. When some one person has greatly angered the queen, and drought is believed to be due to her displeasure on this account, the married women from all the villages in the royal neighbourhood assemble every morning after cooking to dance, singing, 'We are being killed on account of a bogyman in skins' (*re vulaiwa gi Madikadyana di vɬlvɐ̀ana*). Grandmothers nurse the babies and encourage the younger women with their trillings and dancing movements. The dust rises high and by sunset they are black with dirt and sweat; but next day and the next they come again, sometimes for as long as a week, till rain falls or continued drought makes it clear that some other cause is operating as well. The great hardship this dancing entails (for nursing mothers who perform have no time to feed their babies) is thought to melt the heart of the queen. Too much rain, as well as too little, is laid at the door of the queen. On one occasion, when it had rained almost incessantly for six weeks, the chief councillor said in the presence of the queen, 'Fat does not fill the pot' (*makhura a a ɖale bija*), meaning that there can be too much of a good thing—a hint to the queen to regulate things better.

643 789 821 There is no belief that is stronger in the tribe even to-day than that in the power of the queen to transform the clouds. This does not, however, mean that they do not recognize the regularity of the seasons. People know that the month of February is generally the rainiest in the year; that the month *Morenane* (October), when the Southern Cross sets just before bedtime, is the time when the first rains are approaching, and no one would *lova* rain in winter any more than Europeans would organize a day of prayer for rain in that season. Yet if rain does not come at its proper time or the season is generally bad, it may be said, 'The queen has not changed the hoeing season [i.e. the year] nicely' (*a va fedula ledzema ha vutse*); for if the cycle of seasons is considered inevitable, whether the new year is brought in propitiously or otherwise is in the hands of the queen.

643 791 Though renowned as the greatest rain-maker in South Africa, Mujaji never works alone. She always has a rain-doctor, of whom there are many in the tribe, to work with her. She chooses any renowned doctor, but may change him for another if people complain that the rain is bad—

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that is, insufficient or accompanied by too many thunderstorms. For these deficiencies, the queen herself is never blamed. The chief function of the doctor is to co-operate with the queen in some of the things she cannot do: he divines the causes of drought and discovers which forces are hindering the queen's power from taking effect; and, using his own medicines, he aids her in removing these causes and setting right what is wrong. The relation between rain-doctors and the queen is interesting. They are specialists in their art, which they have inherited from their fathers, and are even consulted independently by outside tribes. Khishidwa, the queen's own rain-doctor, is often called by Nwamitwa, the Shangana-Tonga chief, in time of drought, and Tshivulane, a Venda chief, comes, not to *lova* Mujaji, but to call Levea, a rain-doctor on a farm within her jurisdiction. Any payments they receive are their own. Yet these doctors themselves unreservedly state that in the last resort they are dependent on the queen: if she stays their hands, their powers will avail them nothing. It is said, 'If the chief holds the rain from falling, the doctor cannot cause rain' (*hc khosi a ga tswara bula hore e khi ne, Daga e ga se nese*). A rain-doctor sent by the queen to make rain for a Venda chief who came to *lova* once in our presence urged the chief councillor, 'Tell the queen not to hold my hands.' In addition to the chief's right-hand man in rain activities, there are certain lesser rain-doctors whom she employs as her messengers when outside tribes *lova* rain, for she would never dream of giving a suppliant medicine to take back with him. These messengers, though sent by the queen, are, strange as it seems to us, not given any medicine or charm to use in their rain-making. It is considered enough that they come from her, and their payment is the entertainment they receive at the foreign court.

What the queen does to transform the clouds and the exact nature of the objects and medicines associated with her work are enshrouded in the greatest secrecy. It is doubtful whether any one other than the queen herself is in possession of this secret, for it is bound up with the title and power to succeed to the throne. The secrets are always imparted to the successor just prior to the death of the chief, and on occasion in Lovedu traditional history the would-be usurper, to whom the secrets had not been entrusted, has been deposed in favour of the 'chosen' heir. The queen's rain medicines are kept in rough earthen pots (*mehago*) in a part of the village to which few have access. Some of their power is said to derive from a human skull in the rain-pot, and there are horns which are kept in a hut. When these rain-horns (*dinaga ja bula*) are placed on the ground, rain falls; when they are hung up, it clears up and is dry. The medicine in the rain-horns is said, when burnt, to produce smoke which rises up in the air to draw and to produce the clouds. The technique is not unlike *leshwava*, luck medicine, which when burnt draws customers to traders and touts. Associated with the rain cult are the *gomana* drums the beating of which in former times was believed to bring rain, but the true *gomana* ceremonies have not been held for about thirty years. The rain cult to-day is largely confined to observances connected with the queen and her medicines or charms (*dithugula*).

The chief ingredient of the rain-pots is the skin of the deceased chief

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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643 and of important councillors who are her closest relatives: when a chief
789 dies the body is left for some days in the hut, so that, when it is rubbed in a certain way (*hu fɔrɔlwa*), the skin easily comes away. Other ingredients are fat of the scaly ant-eater (*khwara*), a royal animal which, when found, has always to be brought alive to the royal village, and parts of the kudu (*thɔlɔ*). The queen's rain-doctor told us that essential ingredients were sea-water, because it foams and froths (*hu pukula*), feathers of the lightning bird, white and black sea shells, and various roots and
[824] barks, chief among which is the stem of the *khadi* (*Adenia gummifera*), a tough forest creeper that contains much water. *Khadi* stems are also used for sprinkling 'cooling' medicines and for tying the bodies of dead people. Whether the queen uses these ingredients, we cannot say. From time to time a black sheep is killed to give strength to the queen's rain medicines; it has to be washed with water which is afterwards poured into the rain pots, but it is said that such a sheep is merely a present-day substitute for a
[634] human being, usually a child, whose brains were used. Important district heads related to the chief also have their rain-pots. Every year in about August, at the command of the queen, such a district head collects certain roots and barks, knowledge of which he has received from his father, places them in his rain-pot, mixed with water that has been drawn by girls below the age of puberty, and stirs them up so that rain may be good that year. Rain-pots are great secrets and only after years of friendship were we privileged to see one: it was well hidden in the cleft of a rock and partly buried at the foot of a tree on the upper slopes of a hill where the owner's father had dwelt. The rain-pots of the queen we have not seen, and what regular measures she takes are not known for certain; but, since it is said, when there are good rains, that the queen has firmly laid the foundations (*hu thea*) of the year, it is not unlikely that she also stirs her medicines.

789 Great care has to be taken lest the rain-pots 'weaken' (*hu figchela*).
261 They have to be given (*hu luminwa*, to cause to be bitten) the first green foods (*mutshatsha*) every year, kaffir water melon (*legwadzi*) mixed with other green foods being used for the purpose, and at the royal village no one cooks and eats the new summer relishes before this has been done. On this day possessed people or people who have epilepsy also eat medicine with the firstfruits, but ordinary people do not *luma*, and there are none of the public festivities of a semi-military character associated with the eating of the firstfruits among Swazi and Zulu. It is very important too that the first termites (*dinnfwa*), which appear usually in December, just after the first good rains, should be given to the rain-pots. Termites are closely associated with rain: they always fly out of their nests just after the rain; in a dry year there are very few; and it is believed that sprinkling the antheap with rain medicine (*mufugo*) makes the ants come in great numbers. Termites for the rain-pots may not be gathered by married women or girls over the age of puberty, and in 1937, when some young girls carried the first termites to the queen, she gave the termites to the dogs, refusing to use ants that had been thus defiled. The giving of the first termites to the rain-pots is called *bulane*. An interesting case arose out of this practice in January, 1938, when certain people in Uuthudi

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
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area ate termites before the *bulane* of the head. An inquiry was held by the district head and four men were fined two goats each. They were told that, if their case had come before the queen herself, they would have had to pay a head of cattle. Only the few sub-areas under the immediate jurisdiction of the queen herself send termites to the queen; in other areas they send to their own head, and there is no rule that the queen's own rain-charms should be given before others.

The powers of the queen to make rain are not absolute. The queen can control rain only 'in agreement with her ancestors' who are able, if they wish, to stay her hand just as she herself is able to stay the hands of rain-doctors. There are also certain things that, by causing the rain charms to become 'weak' (*figchila*), have power to stop the rain unless proper measures are taken. It has already been shown how heat is associated with illness and things being wrong. If a person has been burned to death or struck by lightning, he must be buried in a wet place near the river or his grave 'cooled' with special medicine obtained from the chief, lest drought ensues. Similarly, abortions or miscarriages, women dying in pregnancy or childbirth, twins killed at birth, babies dying before cutting their teeth or cutting the upper teeth before the lower, initiates dying in the circumcision lodge—all must be buried in a wet place.

Since an electrical storm often means little or no rain, it is believed that 'sending' lightning to kill one's enemies, a common practice of witches, spoils the country by preventing rain. Hence at a tribal gathering (*khivijo*), held in the spring of 1937–8, the people were told among other things that the chief does not want to see 'lightning of people' (as opposed to natural lightning); any district head hearing of anything like this among his people was to report at once to the queen. A common phenomenon in time of drought is the banking up of heavy rain clouds with all the promise of a soaking rain, only to be dispersed by wind. Anything associated with winds is thus thought to prevent rain. That is why witches, by hanging *lefalaja-maru*—literally, 'disperser of the clouds' (*Asparagus plumosis*)—or an ordinary broom on a branch where it will sway in the air, can disperse the clouds; and any one dying of a coughing disease, such as *dire* or consumption, must be buried in wet soil or soil that has been sprinkled with *mufugo* medicine. If abortions or people dying of a coughing disease are buried without these precautions, the grave is called *pukudi* (from *hu pukula*, which perhaps is the opposite of *hu fuga*, to blow upon by a cool breeze, to sprinkle with cooling medicine). *Pukudi* contains the conception of wind issuing upwards or hot air quivering above a heated surface. As soon as the vapour-laden air reaches the grave, it stops or dissolves in the wind and it is even believed that the corpse, thrusting up an arm, waves it about to cause the wind that drives away the rain.

How dangerous wind is considered to be in setting at naught the efforts of the queen was well illustrated on November 15th, 1937. On that day, after propitious black clouds had been dispersed by a gale that lifted the thatch off many a hut, it was proclaimed that the following day had to be a holiday. People said, '*Gi khumela*' (it is a 'turning back' before the goal

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821 has been reached), and we were told that in the old days men of import-
527 ance used to come and condole with (*hu cmcla*) the chief on such a day, as though to sympathize with her in the frustration of her efforts. There are other holidays associated with rain. On the day after the first rain of the season has fallen no hoeing or fieldwork is to be done. Such a holiday is called *le-nkhi-nteme* (do not cut me), as if the earth, believed still to be hot, dislikes being broken up by the hoeing. Such a holiday is also observed after the rain charms have 'bitten' the new termites and first-fruits of the year and when, any time during the summer, rain falls after two of three weeks drought, it is called *muene* (guest or stranger) and the next day observed as a holiday, for one honours a guest.

766 Wrong burials which stop the rain are righted by the use of *mufugo*
821 medicine and the water obtained by squeezing the undigested stomach
● 789 contents (*muswane*) of a sheep down a hole made in the grave with a stick
842 and reaching the body. This is thought to disperse the 'wind' and cool the grave. The flesh of the sheep is eaten without salt. The conception is thus of a grave agitated by ghostly heat and wind, which may be 'laid' by 'cooling', or, as we might say, calming, in the treble sense often of pacifying [the ghost], modifying [the heat], and causing [the wind] to subside. *Mufugo*, the medicine so important in the removal of impediments to rain, has to be obtained from the queen and a specially appointed person is responsible for doling it out in bottles when needed. The office is not conceived to be hereditary, but it has been held by a Mudiga family for some time, being handed down by father to son. When the last official in charge of *mufugo* died, his son was an unmarried man too young for the responsibility of office. Some five years later (1938), when the queen decided that he should assume charge, he protested his youth, though he then had two children, fearing that after contact with the medicine he might forget to wash his hands before eating and thus be rendered impotent. In this he had the full support of his mother, who prevailed upon the queen to allow an older relative to undertake the work provisionally; but the present position is that, should this old man be away, the heir to the office will have to act. Whether *mufugo* is identical with the rain medicine of the rain-pots is not quite clear; but, whatever its ingredients may be, it is considered extremely dangerous, liable to rob men and women of their fertility, and great care is thus necessary when working with it.

789 Sometimes it is said that 'the country is not right' (*naha a e loge*) and
372 then there is a special ceremony in which all the fires in the country are put out with *mufugo*. No generally recognized set of circumstances lead up to such a line of action, nor is there any idea that the fires are defiled in any way. It is simply looked upon as a method of getting rain when there is drought, resorted to when the divining bones of the doctor declare it to be necessary. People sometimes say, 'Fires are put out to usher in a new year,' but this does not mean that putting out the fires is an annual ceremony, as it is, for instance, among the Pedi. The word 'year' must not be taken literally, just as it does not refer to an abstract period of time in the phrase, 'The year has been infected by *hu khuma*', when what is meant is that the rain charms have 'weakened' (*hu khoma*). In this ceremony

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



girls below the age of puberty are sent to draw water for the *mufugo* which the queen's rain-doctor prepares for the occasion, and after a day or two, when the medicine froths up (*ku pukula*), boys are sent with a horn of *mufugo* and a brush of *khadi* creeper (*Adenia gummifera*) to every village in the land. First they heat medicine on the fire of the men's courtyard and thereafter on the threshold and hearth of every hut. The ashes are cleared away by an old woman, for so dangerous is the medicine used that any man, woman, or child entering the hut before it has been smeared with dung will *khuma* and be unable to have children. A new fire is kindled in the men's courtyard, whence each woman fetches a brand for her own hut, for it is taboo to kindle a fire from any other. In return for her firebrand, each woman gives the men stamped mealies or groundnuts, which they eat in the *khoro*. Each married man in turn must give something to the boys who have brought *mufugo*, usually 1*s*. or a fowl (in the old days an arrow or mealies), but often also tobacco or other gifts for, as '*mufugo* does not choose' (*mufugo a u khetha*), anything may be given. Each boy must give 1*s*. or a fowl to the keeper of *mufugo*, keeping the rest as a reward for his labours. It is taboo to work in the fields on the day after *mufugo*. In 1927 some boys, too lazy to fetch the medicine, took matters into their own hands and made a mixture of ash and water, which they used in their rounds. They were discovered and made to pay five head of cattle each and the ceremony had to be performed again.

When the divining bones diagnose drought as due to ancestors, steps have to be taken for a sacrifice at an ancestral grave. Any one of the close relatives of the queen can cause drought: sometimes it is the queen's mother Leakhali, buried at Khaja; sometimes it is Mugodo's sister, buried at Mudzinoni; in 1925–6 it was Mulogwane, the queen's brother, who complained that he was buried in the Christian cemetery, instead of in the shade of the forest. A sacrifice for rain will take place only after it has become clear that, in spite of steps taken to *loba* the queen by means of money or dancing, she fails by her ordinary methods to cause the rain to fall.

January, 1938, was hot and dry. Several headmen had been to *loba*, but no rain fell. Important district heads and councillors thus began to 'travel about, having the bones thrown', to discover the cause, while the queen herself also sent messengers to various well-known diviners. The reply came, 'Seek ye a black sheep. Go with it to show your care for the spirits and you shall see that it will rain nicely.' As is so often the case, no indication was given of the cause of their complaint; the suggestion as to the practical measures to be taken and the identity of the troublesome spirits were quite sufficient. The queen, however, remained inactive; it was not for her to take the initiative till her people humbly begged her to do so. On February 11th three of the most important men at the capital approached her, saying, 'People are crying. Help us.' Thereupon she impatiently replied, 'People tire me. The year was well established, but they have "weakened" (*ku fighula*) it. They want me to be troubled.' She implied that she had safeguarded the year, but that the people themselves, by breaking rain taboos and by their evil works and witchcraft, had undermined that safeguard. When the councillors continued

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



787 pleading, she relented and said, 'Find me a black sheep without blemish
643 [colour].' The first messenger they sent returned without success, but
789 two others were dispatched to scour the country and on the seventeenth one was found. Kheshidwa, the rain-doctor, was now called. Four days passed, but he did not come. Then the queen, angry at the delay, suggested that she should proceed with the ceremony alone. But this the councillors would not hear of; 'You might deviate from the procedure the bones indicate to be essential,' they said. On the fifth day, however, Kheshidwa arrived, explaining his delay as due to the number of medicines he had to find, and at dawn on February 23rd the ceremony took place.

643 A calabash containing *mafugo* was placed in a basket for the chief wife
789 of the queen's brother to carry, and a procession of most of the inmates of the royal village set out with the sheep. They stopped first at a clump of trees near the village, where lies Moyacudugi, a female relative by marriage to the queen on the mother's brother's side. When the queen ordered her chief councillor, as direct representative of the mother's brother's side, to begin, he uncorked the calabash and poured some of its contents over the grave, saying, 'Stop for us these winds and tribulations, that it may rain nicely. They say it is you people whose murmurings are impeding the rain.' His younger sister next took the calabash, praying in almost identical words, followed by the queen herself, who said, 'Aye, we say, stop for us all these *pukudi* [winds from wrong burials] that rain may fall and people find corn.' The people now respectfully greeted (*ku buba*), repeating the praise of Muhale, the king of old, and, during the trillings that followed, the rain-doctor said, 'The frogs do not cry, sire. I do not hear them'; he may have meant that it was so dry that even the frogs were silent, but we do not know for certain.

The procession now proceeded to Maulwi, the sacred grove where are buried members of the royal family and the two last queens. At the grave of Mathukha, mother's brother to the queen and father of the chief councillor, they all sat down while the same procedure was gone through as at the other grave. When it was the queen's turn to pray, she took a small horn wrapped up in rags and placed it on the grave. Then, pouring from the calabash, she prayed, 'Do not continue to hold my arms; leave me to do my things, that rain may fall and people have corn. Tell one another, tell every single one, also the old woman [meaning Leakhali, her mother] and Mujaji, "huckster in the hut", who "casts away some and shares others with the vultures" [Mujaji I]. Do not continue leaving us to be burnt by the sun. As for our health, we are reasonably well; we are merely troubled by the poverty you have left us.' She poured out all the *mafugo*, turning the calabash upside down beside the horn, while the assembled company did obeisance and ululated. The sheep was slaughtered and skinned and small pieces, cut from various parts of the body, were placed in an earthen bowl while the doctor, sitting some distance away, began squeezing the stomach contents to separate the liquid from the more solid part. When he had finished, the chief councillor, his sister, and the queen placed the meat on the grave, telling the gods, 'We approach (*ku sema*) you with this sheep.' The solid stomach contents

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



were placed on the grave, the assembled people greeted and trilled as before, the queen took away her little horn from the grave, and they all departed, carrying the sheep to an open spot some distance from the grave. Here they kindled a large fire and began cooking the meat in two large pots, one containing the internal organs (*mala*) and head, which, on this occasion, are not to be eaten by women of child-bearing age. Normally *mala* of a slaughtered animal are the portion *par excellence* of the women. While the meat was cooking, the doctor took a potsherd containing the 'water' of the stomach contents, his medicine bags and a stick of *khadi* creeper, and proceeded alone to the grave. It is surmised that he must have made a hole in the grave to pour down the water and medicine.

Meanwhile the clouds which had been in the sky at dawn had thickened and, while the pots were still cooking, rain fell and extinguished the fires, which had to be rekindled. The meat was eaten on the spot by all present and just before they all departed the bones were collected, wrapped in the skin, and placed on the grave. Prior to this, however, the doctor had spoken seriously to the councillors to approach the chief about the *pakudi* in the valley below, where a woman who had died in childbirth had been buried 'in the open' without *mafugo*. Ten days later the doctor was called to set the matter right.

This sacrifice is exceedingly rare, but it illustrates well the significant and usual intermingling of religious with what we should call purely magical rites. Thus, as the prayer is offered, it is rain medicine, which works by magic, not beer, the food of the gods, that is poured. The royal grave is treated, not to propitiate the gods, but to constrain them, to keep them cool, so that they will be unable to stop the rain. The sheep is an offering to the gods, a tangible indication that men still 'care for' their ancestors, but the use of the stomach contents on the grave falls into the magical pattern. Another point worth mentioning is that the queen was only one of several officiators: even her divinity does not give her precedence over the nearest living descendants in approaching the complaining spirits.

It has been shown that a great variety of steps can be taken to procure rain, their nature depending upon what is believed to be causing the drought. If the queen herself is thought responsible, and this is usually believed to be the case in the first instance, then her subjects will *lowa* her with gifts or dances to excite her pity and to please her. If there have been wrong burials and rain taboos have been broken, these must be righted, while if the trouble comes from the ancestors, they must be placated. Sometimes one finds a combination of causes, but always it is the divining bones which decide what steps are to be taken. There are rain rites throughout the season, for not only may there be good rain in one area and not in another, but an inopportune period of drought in the best of seasons may have drastic effects on the crops. As an indication of the type of action taken in connexion with the rain cult in any one season, the following has been taken from our diary for the season 1937-8, by no means a very bad year, but one in which the rainfall was below the average:

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



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|---|---|
| 1937 | |
| November 12th | A rain-doctor sent to make rain at Mtimkulu's village, a petty Shangana-Tonga chief to the north, who had sent messengers to *lobo* a few days before. |
| November 14th | A thunderstorm, with very little rain, but a very strong wind, broke in the afternoon. |
| November 15th | Holiday observed to "turn back" the rain which has been scattered by the wind. |
| November 23rd | Rain fell with much lightning, which struck at Khiobeni, one of the districts. |
| November 25th | There was a thunderstorm in which lightning struck at Khidommamatheka, a sub-area of the capital. The place was treated with medicine and in the evening soft rain fell, but not enough for ploughing. |
| December 2nd | Real set-in rain fell till the 3rd. |
| December 4th | Hoeing began. |
| December 8th | First termites brought, but given to dogs, as carried by girls above the age of puberty. |
| December 12th | First termites given to rain charms. |
| December 13th | Holiday. |
| 1938 | |
| January | Period of drought. |
| January 23rd | Mukupi, an important woman district head, came to speak to the queen, as there had been no rain for three weeks. The sun beat down fiercely and the crops were beginning to shrivel up.<br>Several other district heads came to *lobo* with money. |
| February 11th | People were consulting doctors about the drought. Bones declared a sacrifice necessary.<br>Councillors approached queen and messenger sent for a black sheep. |
| February 17th | Kheshidwa, the rain-doctor, called. |
| February 19th | District head at Muduseni (several farms, but an old area of tribe) came with £1 10s. to *lobo*. |
| March 1st–4th | *Logobatiele* dance for rain by the Thovolo. |
| February 22nd | Sacrifice at Maulwi. Some rain fell, but not very much. |
| March and | Kheshidwa called to put right a grave. This was done on the 4th. |
| March 7th | Levaga, a district head from the north, came to *lobo* with £2. |
| April and | Rain fell. |

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Some beliefs associated with the cultivation of *njugo* beans are relevant to our present subject. Among the Lovedu this crop is not planted until the mealies, among which it grows, are 1 ft. high, but this is regarded as a practical measure to prevent injury to the mealies rather than as dictated by the belief, firmly rooted and still put into practice by tribes to the south and south-east of Uulovedu, that *njugo* beans planted too early impede the rain. Only some Lovedu have this belief and no one, as far as we know, acts upon it; nor do the Lovedu pull up the young plants when there is no rain, which the Phalaborwa do, as one Lovedu suggested, because the beans look like hailstones. The Lovedu also say, but again

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



as if it were a foreign conception, that no *nyuge* beans should be planted during the year following the death of a chief. The association of rain and *nyuge* beans seem to belong to a culture complex coming from the south.

The insistence nowadays is upon studying culture change as if it were a phenomenon important only in its relation to European contacts, but there has always been and there still is culture change of a different and, as far as the Lovedu are concerned, more vital nature. Even in the rain cult there have been changes. In the reign of Mujaji II, when the father of Khashidwa succeeded Ramafalo as rain-maker, he instituted *ku runa*, a new ceremony of medicating all hoes with *mafuga* before the hoeing of the queen's field of eleusine, a practice which has fallen into disuse with the recent abandonment of the queen's hillside field for one in the valley which can be ploughed. The breaking of taboos is not necessarily a reflection of the breakdown and decay of custom. Indeed, the technique of the rain cult was based on the assumption that taboos were broken. Breaches account for drought and the counter-vailing efficacy of the queen's measures explains her reputation and the confidence people have in her. Wrong burials are known to prevent rain, but, since people try to avoid the unpleasant publicity involved in getting *mafuga* for the burial of, say, an abortion or in burying it in a wet place, these wrong burials are always taking place.

Neither European contact nor Christianity has succeeded in breaking down the implicit belief of every member of the tribe in the power of the queen to make rain. True, no Christians take part in ceremonies for rain and some do not believe that such things as wrong burials affect rainfall; but they harmonize the new with the old faith by the rationalization that the queen makes rain with the help of God, for they have all seen and can cite corroborative evidence for the powers of the queen. That the queen herself is honest and genuinely believes not only in her own powers, but also in the outside influences that prevent her from achieving success, can be seen in the reply she gave to the messengers who came on February 19th, 1938, with £1 10s. from a one-time district head in her kingdom to beg for rain. 'Go,' she said, 'and tell the master of Mudzweni that we are trying, but things will just not come right' (arrangements were being made for a sacrifice to the ancestors for rain). The money, however, was kept.

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939) 1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14



other way of life can oust it from its general pre-eminent position. The man or woman who is in need of a pot or other article in the busy agricultural season vainly places an order with a craftsman, and 'He who takes a journey in spring must transact all his affairs' (i.e. not only where he goes, but also on the way), for he will not be able to pass by again during that season.

Agriculture provides the immediate security of the people, but in turn it relies upon the life-giving rain, the power to make which has been projected upon the queen. The queen is thus the foundation stone of the security of the cultural structure. Her rain-making powers safeguard not only agriculture against the caprices of nature, but the whole country against the attacks of its enemies. The queen is more than that: the method of supplicating for rain has merged with the mechanisms of the social structure and has constructed the bonds with the districts, thus, despite political decentralization, securing the unity of the tribe. And, finally, the elevation of a woman to this exalted position has strengthened the status of women and their important role in the society and has emphasized the virtue of feminine qualities. But the queen is not conceived to be intimately linked with everything in the culture: her position in the *kkoro* of the men is weakly institutionalized, she has no immediate contact with the European administration to the interferences of which her powers are doubly vulnerable, and the welfare of the cattle elsewhere, as among the Maḍala and Xanaŋwa, ritually brought into relation with the chief, is outside her province.

As rain-maker, the queen controls half the great cosmic forces. Magic may be invoked, the gods propitiated, in the interests and for the ends of individuals, but ultimately these interests and ends and the destiny of the society depend upon the mediation and will of the queen. Man's sense of security in the face of personal misfortunes can be re-established by magic or religion, but the orderliness of cosmic laws is guaranteed only by the relationship of the queen with the supernatural. These laws are inscrutable, but the procedures for arousing pity in the heart of a human queen or for appeasing her anger are intelligible; and thus man can have confidence in undertaking his tasks. Moreover, he need not and must not resort to magic in his major economic activities, for he can and must rely upon the queen. Since the final justification of the pivotal position of the queen is her divinity, garden magic is conceived to be disruptive, like witchcraft: it competes with the power of the queen. One consequence of this conception is that success or failure in subsistence activities is regarded as immediately dependent upon industry, the application of practical knowledge and suitable materials, and that he who uses garden magic is a thief or a witch.

In most neighbouring tribes there is some public treatment of the seeds before they are sown, or the hoes and ploughs are smeared with medicine obtained from the chief: among highveld Sotho such as the Xanaŋwa and Molotsha, there is even a special hut for storing the sacred seed, a few grains of which are handed to each householder at sowing time, and in this hut, which is associated with the *gome* drums and with fertility in man, girls reaching puberty are isolated and newly married

FX14 Lovedu FX14



couples sleep for the first few nights. Among the Lovedu these practices have no counterpart. Given rain, what is necessary to make the crops prosper is work and good soil, not medicine, and as a result one receives the impression of a practical attitude, not only to agriculture, but, by extension, also to most economic activities. But success both in hunting and in pastoral activities to some extent depends upon the use of magic, although by comparison with the Nguni and Tswana the cattle cult is very much attenuated.

Thrift and industry are regarded as virtues. It is the hard-working bride who is sought after, while the most eligible bridegrooms are the *dibuglu*, those who by industry have filled their grain pits. But what is valued is not just work; it is work to attain self-sufficiency, that will make one independent, rather than work which places one in a subservient position. Even, as they phrase it, 'In work for the chief, it is only the fool who kills himself'. Hard work must not be thought of in terms of our conceptions, for the outlook of the Lovedu is far less dominated by intensive striving and deep concentration and more by care-free, easy-going standards than ours. Work has dignity, for the maxim, 'It is not the gift-pumpkin [but the produce of one's own garden] that is juicy', is meant, not to deprecate the gift, but to foster pride in the products of one's labour; it is a tenet appropriately urged when the clothes which a youth displays have been acquired, not by his own efforts, but as a present from his parents. Work is accorded recognition: the child who begins herding is said also to begin to deserve the food he gets. Work excuses failures and losses, for as they say, 'The one who loses cattle is the one who herds them', or, more generally, 'The one who breaks is the one who works'. On the other hand, there is scorn of indolence in the proverb, 'The sluggard has no locusts even if they sleep in his courtyard', and a warning in 'He who sits with staring eye-balls [idly] will die, but he who scratches for food [cultivates assiduously] will live'. Considering the craving for beer, it is almost heroic for a man, when refused this elixir of life, to console himself with the thought that 'He who stints me is he who helps me' [because I shall better be able to attend to my work]. But the work that is honoured and considered most congenial is work in situations in which, as in the work party, the reciprocities are fundamental.

The weakness of the queen as a woman is also her strength and the source of the prestige of the tribe. Her foreign policy is appeasement, not war; for, as they phrase it, 'The queen does not fight'. Reciprocity is the basis of her relations with her district heads, reconciliation the method of settling difficulties. Appeasement, one of the great values in the society, harmonises with, supports, and is in turn supported by the reliance of the whole social structure upon compromise. This value and the traits corresponding to it interpenetrate every aspect of culture and of life. The hard régime of the initiation 'school' has been softened: there is no need to direct its procedures towards hardening the youth or instilling manly courage, and military discipline and regimentation are of little or no importance. Diplomacy works hand in hand with the methods of the *khoro* and of reconciliation (*ku khunchwa*), but it also

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14



and the regularity of the seasons are bound up with the life of the chief, but the identification of the earth with the chief in the phrase ' mabu a fesa ' (the earth is hot, burning) which is used by all Lowveld tribes as a euphemism to denote the illness or death of the chief, seems to imply some connexion between the life of the chief and the fertility of the earth. Some such association seems implicit also in the feeling among the Lobedu that the chief should have no physical defect (it is thought to be impossible for the queen to be ill, and the present queen has never had a day's illness) and should lead a secluded life, being seen by and giving audience to royal relatives and the nobility only. So close is the association between the ruler and the land he rules among the Lobedu that the chief may not leave the country or cross its boundaries, a taboo which made it impossible for Modjadji to register her vote at the nearest Native Commissioner's office in the recent elections for the Native Council.

The great power of the chief in the three most important tribes of the Lowveld lies in rain-making. Here we find as in so many other aspects of their culture an intensification of a feature present in modified form in many other tribes, leading to a difference as great or greater than the complete absence of the trait. Many chiefs in South Africa are great rain-makers, and tribes of the Highveld and Sekukuniland share with those of the Lowveld the custom in time of drought of sending young men to ' beat mofoko ' pegs around the country or to put out all the fires in the country and rekindle new ones in each village. But the Lowveld chiefs, especially Modjadji, are the greatest rain-makers of all, recognized in the old days as such by tribes as far south as the Swazi and Zulu, and rain ritual here has characteristic features not found elsewhere. Important among these is the custom of dancing for rain. When the rains do not come at the right time, it is usual for each headman in turn to come to the royal kraal with his followers to *kubu* rain by dancing for the chief, and when this does not help the women come as a last resort to do a special dance which is so exacting and causes so much crying on the part of small babies, who have to go hungry while their mothers dance, that it is believed the chief must be moved by it. This custom, still practised by the Lobedu, has died out elsewhere in the Lowveld, having been last performed among the Khaha in 1911. The belief that twins, mis-

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14



643 carriages, abortions, and people dying of any severe coughing illness
789 prevent rain from falling unless specially buried in wet soil is found
766 with variations all over the Lowveld, among Sotho and Shangana-Tonga alike.

643 Women rulers have their 'wives' just as though they were men,
588 and a peculiar feature of Lobedu culture is the large number of wives
644 or *bathanoni* of the queen. Every Lobedu induna sends a daughter to be a *mothanoni* of the queen, as do also any of the nobility who wish
[557] to be on a good footing with her; and these, together with girls sent by foreign tribes as gifts for rain, form a large harem. *Bathanoni* of the chief occupy an honoured position at the Head Kraal, have, on the whole, less work than ordinary women and are a source of honour to their family who through them become privileged to call the queen their *tsetse*—bridegroom or son-in-law. They may be given in marriage to relatives of the queen or to commoners, in which case the peculiar situation arises of their children preferring
[551] to call themselves sons and daughters of the queen, using the surname Modjadji, to taking the lineage name of their father. Often, however, the *bathanoni* remain with the queen, the ideal being to remain virgin for some years, after which they are given their own hut in the
[565] village and permission to have children. A *mothanoni* of noble birth ranks higher than a commoner and can even bear the heir to the throne when the queen herself is barren. Other Lowveld chiefs do
[184] not receive daughters from their headmen, though the Khaha and Letswalo used to accept girls from foreign chiefs for rain as did the Lobedu. These women became a link and source of friendship between the two tribes and, especially among Lobedu, played a real part in the gradual growth and influence of the tribe. Even the great Ngungunyane once sent women to Modjadji for rain, and there are, to-day still, at her head kraal sisters and daughters of important chiefs in the Northern Transvaal, though money and cattle have now been substituted for women in such exchanges.

643 The legal heir to the throne is, in the Lowveld, the eldest son of the chief wife, who should always be the daughter of the chief's
[771] mother's brother. The cattle for this marriage are not, as among the Pedi and one or two Highveld tribes, contributed by all the headmen, nor are the fires in the country extinguished on the occasion of the marriage.

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14



from the witch: it is generally argued that he who knows how to counteract wizards must himself be one, and Lowveld doctors are known to 'try' one another by sending lightning or familiars to their rivals to test their powers. Doctors have been openly accused of witchcraft. This confusion is, however, in no way detrimental to the practice of great doctors since not only is a doctor unlikely to work against a client when it is in the interest of his practice to please, but as there must always be a motive in evil-doing, witchcraft without intention being impossible, doctors harm only their enemies.

DAY AND NIGHT WIZARDS. The term *moloi*, wizard, is in the Lowveld equivalent to 'criminal' and implies evil intention, desire to kill others. In contrast to the Shangana–Tonga, there is thought to be no such thing as unintentional witchcraft. The wizard knows he is a wizard and harms others because he bears towards them feelings of envy or malice. The methods employed in witchcraft do not differ from those of good magic; the distinction between the two lies in the evil motives, injurious to social life, which lie behind witchcraft. Hence use of magic on one's possessions to hurt the fingers of whoever tries to steal them or sending animals to frighten a deserting wife into returning home is not witchcraft, though the technique is identical with that of the witch, because designed not to kill or injure seriously but to uphold the social order.

All tribes in the Lobedu culture area have a technical distinction between two classes of wizards—the night wizard (*moloi oa bosiu*) and the day wizard (*moloi oa matsearе*). The night wizard, usually but not exclusively a woman, inherits his evil powers from his mother who teaches him the art in early infancy. His methods are direct: by going himself or sending familiars, various animals such as the stoat and [illegible] (human beings whom he has killed and enslaved), he works his harm. He works mostly at night, and there exists a sort of society of wizards who dance together at night and recognize one another by day. The day wizard, on the other hand, does not necessarily come of a stock of wizards. Any one who uses medicine to poison or kill is a day wizard. Sending lightning, using people's footprints or pointing at them to harm them, poisoning food and beer, these are the methods of the day wizard in whose work the 'spell',

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
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But the whole cycle of myths merely emphasizes in very general terms the importance of rain-making as a prerequisite of the claim to chieftainship and for the well-being of the tribe; it does not concern itself with justifying the validity of the various institutional arrangements that are the main support of the beliefs and values of the queen's mystical credentials.

### *Conception of the Natural Order*

The Lovedu do not oppose man and nature. There are no explicit formulations of the nature of the universe, but a natural order inexorably going its ordained way is implicitly rejected in their conceptions. The assumption is that cosmic forces are controllable and, in fact, controlled at every turn by man for his own benefit. Since nature is of interest and importance only so far as it is or can be used by society, there is no such conception as a world order unrelated to man's activities and desires. The order of nature is a controlled one. There are various ways in which man is able to use and control powers in nature—by *vuŋaga* (the evil aspect of which is *vulzi*), i.e. by the use of power concentrated in certain persons and objects; by appeal to the ancestor-gods upon whom are projected the powers that the child experiences in relation to its parents; through the mysteries of the *diŋoma* which are associated with initiation and the fertility cult; and through the divinity of the queen whose concern it is to control nature in the interests of the tribe as a whole. This idea of the control of nature by the chief on behalf of the tribe is not unique; it is common among the Bantu tribes of South Africa. But the Lovedu emphasis is on the divine origin and special affinity with nature of the queen herself, whereas in tribes such as the Zulu and Tsonga, where the mystical relation of the chief to his people and his powers over nature have to be achieved by magical strengthening on his accession and to be renewed periodically, it is largely by means of the magic of the royal regalia that the chief is able to exercise control. Among all, including Lovedu, one of the most important factors in the powers and position of the chief is the fact that he is the living representative of the long line of royal ancestors (tribal gods). There is considerable overlapping of these four categories among the Lovedu. Thus ancestors are kept satisfied and happy by a charm placed in their shrine: the queen controls rain not only through her divinity but also by means of medicines and charms and appeals to her ancestors who can prevent her from making rain. Let us consider these means for the control of nature in greater detail.

### *Vuŋaga (skilled use of power concentrated in persons and objects)*

The forces of nature may be manipulated through properties intrinsic in various objects, animate and inanimate. The substances in which these attributes or powers (*maŋa*) reside are mainly *melimo* (medicines) or *mere* (plants). But the term medicines in this context has a wider connotation than the parallel term among us; it includes both medicine and magic, and is a medico-magical conceptual category which to the Lovedu is quite distinct

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



from the supernatural. While anyone who knows a cure for an ailment is manipulating the forces of nature and using *vuŋaga*, there are doctors who, by virtue of long training, know many medicines, have learnt how to divine and have been imbued with additional perspicacity and powers as a result of a special initiation. Medicine functions by virtue of the properties, actual or ascribed, of matter; the principles underlying the operation of medicines assume mechanical cause and effect and even the divining bones are read according to rule.

There are, however, two types of doctor who fall into a different category: the *lelɔpɔ* doctor, directly possessed and guided by an ancestor spirit, who largely confines his activities to curing possessed people, and the *muŋome* or 'smeller-out' who is generally a foreigner. People using the forces of nature for evil purposes are *valvi* (witches and sorcerers) and are dealt with in another context. *Vuŋaga*, it will be seen, is the use of impersonal power inherent in matter, which is extracted by the expert (*ŋaga*) and applied in the interests of the health and well-being of men; it is also the exercise of personal qualities or skills, either inherited or acquired through spirit possession or guidance.

*Ancestors*

Ancestors can influence for good and evil the fortunes only of their own descendants, who in the case of the chief's ancestors are taken to include the whole tribe. Their control over the forces of nature is not explicitly formulated; and what is expressly stated is not always confirmed in Lovedu religious practices. The ancestors are clearly conceived to exercise an overall control. A man will always assert that no harm or illness can befall him if his ancestors are watchful enough, for they have power to ward off all evil and misfortune. It is said that even witches cannot, without the will of the ancestors, enter a village or deliver the last fatal blow that kills a man. But in practice the will of the ancestors either is not interposed, for no ascertainable reason, or is ineffective to ward off attacks. If some great sorrow overtakes a man, it is said that 'his ancestors have had an accident' implying that he has been temporarily deprived of their protection and is at the mercy of his enemies. Even medicines are said to be ineffective without the co-operation of one's ancestors, the conception being not merely that their goodwill is essential but also that *vuŋaga* belongs to the ancestors. In fact, however, the ineffectiveness of medicines is never in any concrete case attributed to the lack of such co-operation.

Ancestors are appealed to and thanked for good crops, fertility, plenty, and all manner of good fortune and success. The desire to be remembered and given tendance is attributed to them, and they may themselves cause harm and sickness to descendants who neglect them; but somewhat inconsistently a man may with impunity neglect them for many years and give them tendance only when misfortune overtakes him. Ancestors may be approached and propitiated or thanked by means of offerings and prayer

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



643 physical imperfections, not susceptible to the ills that befall ordinary men; that she cannot die a natural death but departs only by her own volition; that succession to the throne is uncertain since the choice of a ruler must in the last resort be made by the spirits of the tribe; that though she may not have a husband, lest political control become concentrated in him, yet she must bear the heir by a secret consort (a royal classificatory brother) specially chosen to maintain untarnished the purity of the royal blood; that she ensures the regularity of nature and the changing of the seasons; and, more 643 particularly, that her death dislocates the rhythm of nature, bringing 731 drought and famine, the abrogation of law and order. People today still speak with horror and fear of the years (1894–6) following the death of the previous queen, Majuji II. They were years, as we know from documentary sources, when drought, locusts, rinderpest and, in their wake, unprecedented famine and desolation, wiped out practically all the cattle and perhaps a third of the human population.

643 The preservation of the queen's sanctity requires that her life be subject to observances which shield her from the public eye and restrain her movements. She is 'the huckster in the hut' (*mushava-ndoni*) who sells her rain-medicines from the seclusion of her abode, and may not move about freely or leave the district of the capital. She was the only chief in the Union who, a few years ago, could not go to the Native Commissioners' Office to exercise the vote of her people in the election of a representative to the Native Representative Council. She cannot attend large assemblies of men, and is generally inaccessible except to her close relatives and great councillors. But otherwise her activities are not restricted, nor is her life a continuous ritual and, unlike other Divine Kings, there are no elaborate safeguards surrounding her every movement.

[762] Tradition decrees that chiefs may have no physical defect, but not that they must die while still young and strong. Ritual suicide of the queen is by Lovedu conceptions not a means of guaranteeing a timely death lest failure of physical powers should upset the regularity of nature, but rather a symbol of her divinity, for it proves that she is not heir to the weaknesses of ordinary man. It is mystically connected with the fourth circumcision school in her reign: she must see the boys going in but not coming back. The Lovedu queen is believed to be immune from disease, but age does not diminish—it even increases—her mystical powers over nature. The only disqualification to rule is inability to make rain in the early period of her reign. Once she [789 has demonstrated, by her ability to make rain, that the rain-charms have 821] been entrusted to her and that she has been divinely chosen, irregularities in the seasons are attributed not to weakness of her powers but to some extraneous factor, such as contraventions of rules associated with keeping the country cool, disobedience to the chief, and the anger of the ancestor spirits.

643 Arrangements connected with succession of a new queen also emphasize 766 her mystical relations with the cosmic order. The death of her predecessor 789

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



was not announced for a year, while, as the body decomposed, such vital ingredients of the rain-medicine as the skin and body-dirt were carefully collected; after the announcement a period of anarchy often supervened as rival claimants marshalled their armed forces for the struggle for the throne. At the end of this year of mourning all the fires of the country were put out with purificatory rain-medicine (*mufugo*) from the official keeper at the capital.

This fire rite symbolizes purification of the country as well as a transition from one order to another. At any time when the country is not right (*naha a e loge*), as when there is severe drought, the fires are put out 'to usher in a new year' (i.e. a new order or period of operative forces). But the fire rite also symbolizes the means through which the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen are asserted. Finally, the beating out of the fires with cooling medicine is part of a complex of practices connected with heat and cold, symbolizing respectively dysphoria and euphoria. The 'earth is hot' (*mavu a fesa*) on the death of the queen and a new cosmic order has to be inaugurated by cooling it in preparation for the new rain-maker.

After the fire rite there follows the divine identification of the successor by the rite of opening the door. The rival claimants, one of whom, chosen by the inner royal council and the deceased queen, has been secretly prepared for his office, pass the hut in which the queen has died. They announce their identity to the spirit of the deceased, lightly touching the door of the hut, which yields to the chosen successor.

In and around the inner secret council where the choice is actually made centre serious tensions, not only between the present ruler and the heir-elect for whose sake and succession she must poison herself, apparently not always willingly, but also between those who depend for their position and prestige upon the patronage of one or the other. The 'chosen' heir always goes to live far away, ostensibly to conceal his or her identity but in reality also owing to a serious conflict with the reigning sovereign.[1]

For the regulation of cosmic forces the queen relies not only on her divinity but also upon the royal rain-medicines and, in the last resort, on the agreement of the royal ancestor spirits. To prevent the weakening of the rain-medicine it must be revitalized by being given the first termites and first-fruits each year, and occasionally parts of a black sheep or, in the old days, a human being.

Rain-charms are liable to weaken (*figthela*) or become defiled (*khuma*) by certain deviations from the normal course of nature unless special precautions are taken. Twins, babies cutting their upper teeth before their lower, women dying in pregnancy, abortions and miscarriages, men dying from *fere*, a deadly coughing disease believed to be contracted by having sex intercourse with a woman who has had a miscarriage or abortion or whose child has died before weaning—all these are deviations which contaminate the earth, causing it to be 'hot', and therefore have to be buried in wet soil or

[1] Males are not debarred from succession; indeed the early rulers were all men. But a definite preference for women rulers seems now to be firmly established.

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



cooled with rain-medicine. The polluted corpse (called *pukudi*, the opposite of *fuga*) is thought of as thrusting up an arm and waving it about to disperse the rain.

It is the dutyof the queen each year to *thea* or 'establish' the season propitiously for her people. Certain district heads who are close relatives of the queen have rainpots which they revitalize every year with medicine from the queen and sir them up at the queen's command to ensure a propitious season. In the old days the year was 'established' also by the beating of the sacred drums (*gmana*) and a visit to the royal ancestor graves, but this has fallen into disuse.

If there is drought or if the rain does not come at its appropriate time, people say the queen has not changed the year properly and steps are taken to approach her. Royal relatives may approach her personally or complain in her hearing that she is killing her people by withholding rain; district heads may formally pay homage (*hu lova*) with gifts of £1 or a head of cattle, or may bring a troupe of dancers to please her and invoke her pity at the spectacle of peope dancing when they should be hoeing. The songs (*lesugu*) are associated with offerings to the ancestors and with rain. If these efforts are of no avail diviners are consulted to determine the cause of drought—the rain-charms nay have been 'weakened' or evil practices of witches may have prevented rin. In 1937 the people were told at a tribal gathering to report lightning sent' by witches, and shortly afterwards, when lightning had struck a treenear a village, boys were sent to sprinkle every house in the area with *mufugo* to 'cool' the lightning. Witches may also disperse rain by hanging up medicated branches which sway in the air. If it is an ancestor that is 'holding the queen's hands' he or she has to be propitiated by the sacrifice of a blacl beast or sheep on the grave.

When winds fustrate the efforts of the queen to make rain, especially when a gale dispeses auspicious black clouds, people come to condole with her as if she had lst a relative, and it is taboo to work in the fields the next day, just as it is on the day after the first rain of the season and on certain other occasions.

The queen is 'Transformer of the Clouds', the changer of the seasons, and guarantor of their cyclic regularity, but she can exercise her powers auspiciously only in certain conditions and in 'agreement with the ancestors'.

*Digoma*

The fourth category of forces by which nature is regulated in the interests of man consists of *digoma* which are associated more especially with changes in the status of man. A *goma* is primarily a drum, but as an abstract concept it is particularly identified with the power concentrated in the drum cult. This cult includes the large complex of institutions connected with rites of transition, of which the year-long *vyali-vuhwera* (fertility cult) is one. A *goma* is thought of as something mystical and secret, awesome and esoteric. The circumcision 'school' for boys is called a *goma* which is said to 'bite'

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



of twins, abortions, miscarriages, and women dying in childbirth, or by the cosmic chaos resulting from the death of the chief. 'Hot blood' is one of the commonest causes of illness. *Leswa* (burning) is primarily a physiological condition of a woman resulting from abortion and it may be transmitted to the man who has intercourse with her, who then contracts the dreaded and fatal *dere*, a coughing disease considered to be quite different from consumption (*lefiha*). 'Heat' affects the physical potency of medicines and charms, the mental repose of the gods, the mysterious powers of *dithugula*, and the welfare of the whole country. It stirs (*dzusa*) the gods to anger and it activates the criminal propensities of witches.

'Heat' and 'cold', then, are all-important conceptual categories which are brought into relation with the functioning of the physical, mental, and emotional forces in man, in the ancestors, and in nature. Wherever 'heat' is considered to be generated, the proper antidote is the administration of 'cooling' medicines, i.e. substances which have the property of counteracting the heat or soothing the burning. The remedy is to put right what is wrong (*hu logisa*), to secure a return to normal conditions by cooling agencies. If the whole country is in an abnormal condition (*a e loge*, literally, is not right) all the fires must be sprinkled with *mufugo* medicine (*hu fuga* means to blow upon with a cool breeze). Sources of heat to the earth, e.g. twins, abortions, must be buried in wet soil; ancestor spirits aroused by 'heat' (anger) have to be calmed by squirting water (*hu phasa*) on objects once in their possession or over their graves. Cooling medicines likewise counteract that burning of the fingers which constrains witches to do evil, while charms protecting the village against witches are often called *mashɔthɔjɔ* (things causing coolness). In all these cases the active reagent in the medicines is some substance having 'cooling' properties, such as the river stones guarding the entrance to villages or built into shrines of ancestors, the succulent bulbs used in the rite for the removal of the 'dirt' (*khitshila*) of death, the great overhanging fig-trees shading shrines, the green undigested chyme from a sheep or goat's alimentary canal that figures prominently in ritual. Much medical ingenuity goes into the manufacture of powders and decoctions which, owing to their special cooling properties, will counteract heat; and it is not surprising that the Lovedu way of curing malaria is to seek drugs that will drive out the 'heat' by means of profuse perspiration. 'Heat' is most commonly caused by abnormalities associated with the procreation and the actual or threatened destruction of human life—hence the close association of 'heat' with sex, reproduction, and death.

Another malignant force, *muridi* (shadow), is conceived as evil cast by certain conditions. It infects those upon whom it falls, but if they are healthy, the effect upon them is invisible and harmless, though they become carriers who may transmit the contagion to others with whom they come into contact, especially those whose resistance is weak, such as new-born babies and sick people. 'Shadow' thus explains the spread of contagion, not by direct contact but through an intermediate unaffected carrier. *Muridi* is

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



cause the latter to die by aggravating his illness. Similarly a man's mistress must avoid coming near the hut of his wife when she is ill or in childbirth, lest the mistress's sinister track endanger the life of the wife.

*Makhuma* (from *ku khuma*, to mix) is a concept which uses the analogy of contamination by mixture or contact to account for physical weakening, wasting away or enfeeblement (*ku figɛhɛla*). The situations that constitute the chief source of *makhuma* are critical transitions in the life of the individual as well as serious crises such as severe illnesses. The evil contaminates or infects the person who has undergone the change or who, in the case of death, comes into contact with its baneful influence. He seems to suffer from loss of vitality, or to become dislocated because of the change in his condition.

The measures taken to combat *makhuma* are in the first instance preventive. Strengthening medicines are administered or inoculated to fortify the individual by anticipation; thereafter, under isolating conditions that are gradually relaxed, an adjustment is made to the new situation. Thus novices in the various initiations are medically treated in anticipation of their susceptibility to *khuma* on entering their new condition. Babies are fortified (*ku thuswa*, to be helped) by scarification and steaming before they leave the hut of confinement; kin and other inmates of the village must after a death be readjusted by means of medicines and other treatment to the change caused by the death lest they *khuma*. *Makhuma* also affects possessed people who fail to use medicine with the first-fruits. A man will *khuma* if he cohabits with a woman after the death of her child unless she has first been medically purified, and she must also be careful not to give food to other children before treatment lest they get ill and die. If one baby dies, any illness its successor may have is liable to be diagnosed as due to *makhuma*. Even cattle may *khuma* after a death in the village or if a woman enters the cattle fold.

By logical extension and the invocation of a further series of presuppositions the concept is applied to the bones of a diviner, which are liable to *khuma* (lose their diagnostic powers) every month—they are said to 'see their moons'—or when used to divine about a death, and must be washed in medicine before being used again. Similarly the queen's rain-medicine will *khuma* unless given the first termites and first-fruits, or when people neglect observances connected with the burial of those who are 'hot'.

The evils differently conceptualized in the notions of 'heat', *makhuma* and 'shadow' have this in common: they are all instances of a ritual impurity, generated by certain states or conditions, not because of their morally reprehensible nature but because of their abnormality or their relation to reproductive processes or critical changes in life. 'Heat' and 'shadow' appear to be different aspects of the same kind of ritual impurity, but 'shadow' is dangerous only to someone whose resistance is low because of illness or immaturity, while 'heat' may have deleterious effects not only on healthy people but on natural phenomena, on ancestor spirits, and on

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



754 standing of ordinary men; sorcery is the manipulation of lawful means for unlawful ends.

The night-witch belongs to an unholy fraternity whose members meet at night to dance to their drums and deliberate upon their deeds of darkness. She uses no medium of destruction and no medicine or spells, but has inborn powers to do what is physically impossible to ordinary men. She goes herself on her nefarious errands or uses familiars. Witches are almost invariably women, partly no doubt because it is difficult to conceive of women having the facilities to purchase medicines for purposes of sorcery, partly also because they are endowed with more mysterious powers than men. The sorcerer, usually a man, whose machinations involve the use of medicines and spells, is a day-witch because his power is derived from ordinary natural techniques 'of the day'. The essence of sorcery is the criminal use of the potency of medicines which can be, and usually are, used in the service of legitimate ends.

754 Many medicines are specifically good or bad and their use cannot traverse their intrinsic nature; but some of the most important are good and hence 673 moral, or bad and hence immoral according as they are used for socially approved or socially disapproved ends. *Madabi*, for example, has the power to transmute the nature of things. It is right for a husband to manipulate *madabi* in a way that will cause wild animals to appear while his runaway spouse works for her lover, for in this way he may frighten her into returning to him. But a jilted lover who takes revenge upon a girl is guilty of sorcery if he uses *madabi* to change her sex when her child is about to be born and thereby endangers her life. Such an act is unlawful vengeance, which is sharply distinguished from lawful restitution; it reflects a desire to injure another for personal motives which are not in harmony with approved social values.

754 Witchcraft and sorcery can always be counteracted. A favourite method of dealing with a witch is the use of reprisal magic whereby the evil is sent • 781 back to him, but there are many charms and medicines, all relying on the power of *ruyaga*, by means of which witchcraft can be combated or rendered harmless. Villages are protected against witches and sorcerers by charms circling the village or placed at strategic points, while the witch within the village is treated by *hu fera*, i.e. a drug is introduced into his food which has the power of making him forget his frustration and seek compensation in day-dreaming and doddering. After witchcraft or sorcery has been established by divination as the cause of an evil, and the culprit has been identified (the diviner mentions no name but gives certain attributes, such as sex, clan, locality), it is open to the victim to make an accusation and risk the legal proceedings that will inevitably follow. But resort to law is not entirely satisfactory since appeasement, not the hardening of animosities that accusations occasion, is the function of law. Moreover, the initiation of legal sanctions against a witch may spur him to greater activity.

777 Witch beliefs reflect the Lovedu notion that almost all the misfortunes

4: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1954
FX14 Lovedu FX14



that befall men, whether sickness, barrenness, lightning that strikes men, huts, or cattle, failure of an individual's crops, or death of his children, are caused by the hatred and envy in men's hearts.

There is no greater fear than the fear that gnaws at the heart of a Lovedu who suspects he has been bewitched. Yet he is not impotent before its onslaught. By ascribing destructive forces, disease, and other evil to witchcraft and sorcery, and at the same time believing in the power of magic (*rungaga*) to counteract witchcraft, a Lovedu is able to feel that he is master of his own fate. Evil in the world on this theory becomes intelligible, not arbitrary and capricious. This is an ordered and just world in which evil, being held to express itself largely in witchcraft and sorcery, is outlawed and criminal, and in which good ultimately triumphs. And if this projective system affords a convenient theory of failure, it also stresses the virtue of goodwill for human welfare.

### *Relationships of Man to Man*

That the greatest source of all evil should be the envy and jealousies in men's hearts is in keeping with the emphasis everywhere in Lovedu social life on the importance of good relationships between man and man. Bad relations and non-fulfilment of obligations between kin may, as we have seen, cause not only bad luck, through ancestral displeasure, but even illness, through the automatic force of *mahava*. The dissatisfaction in a mother's heart, whether conscious or not, in connexion with her daughter's marriage may cause her sterility, just as the complaints of a sister may be the cause, as seen in the bones, of the illness of her brother's children. The queen's emotions, too, affect the rain and it becomes important, therefore, for the welfare of all that she should not be sad or displeased.

Dominating relations between individuals and between groups is the whole pattern of mutuality, co-operation, and long-run reciprocities in the social structure. 'One leg cannot dance a *gusha*' say the Lovedu; co-operation is essential for the tasks of life. Security is bound up with the mutualities of kin, cognatic, agnatic, and affinal. In a society where wealth cannot be accumulated, it is not surprising that men's efforts should be directed towards building up and maintaining through generations links of marriage and kinship with all that these imply. These reciprocities in the society are motivated by unavoidable necessity but they are long-run ones. There is no weighing up of one service against another, nor any attempt to seek prestige by lavishness. Moreover, it is sharing and helpfulness not the display of one's generosity that is wanted.

Side by side with the emphasis on give and take, the society provides in such a manner for the place and achievement of individuals that competitiveness is limited and aggressive traits are outlawed. The immediate goals of individuals are divergent, and men are not conceived as striving against one another for the attainment of the same end. There is no special prestige

5:Krige E-5 (1936-1938, 1961-1962) 1964
FX14 Lovedu FX14

# PROPERTY, CROSS-COUSIN MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY CYCLE AMONG THE LOBEDU[1]

Eileen Jensen Krige

THE Lobedu are a South Bantu people characterized by the institution of 'divine kingship'. They live in a mountainous area of the North-eastern Transvaal lowveld. Originally from *Bekhalaga* (S. Rhodesia), they migrated south when the empire of Monomotapa broke up and established themselves as rulers over the sparse Sotho population they found in occupation. The rain-making powers of their queen, enhanced by the mystery and secrecy of her ritual seclusion, attracted many accretions from diverse tribal groups from surrounding areas who sought security and peace particularly during the period of unrest following the wars of Shaka, the Zulu, and the raids of Matabele and Swazi. For enemies feared to attack the Lobedu queen lest they be visited by drought and locusts. The descendants of the Lobedu proper therefore form only a small portion of the total population which, however, except for relatively recent Tsonga immigrants from Portuguese East Africa, is remarkably homogeneous in culture. The Lobedu had no military traditions and built up their kingdom by peaceful means.

The form of government is that of a central authority with the queen as the head of state and spatially defined political

[1] The field-work on which this essay is based was carried out jointly with my husband, the late J. D. Krige, under the auspices of the International African Institute in 1936–8, and was supplemented and brought up to date by short field trips in 1961 and 1962.

5:Krige E-5 (1936-1938, 1961-1962) 1964
FX14 Lovedu FX14



suggesting that as the first wife was not strong they should send her uterine sister as a little 'follower' to help her. Finding that her son was agreeable she reported the matter to his eldest half-brother, head of the homestead, who discussed the matter with his brothers.

The ultimate guarantor of the interests and economic independence of the 'house' is the cattle-linked sister with whose bride-price the wife was obtained. As we have seen, she occupies a very special position in the 'house' built by her cattle. Even before her brother's bridal party arrives at his homestead with the new bride she is taken to his married sister's homestead where a goat is slaughtered for her in recognition of their special relationship. When the sister visits her old home she will 'put down her things' and make herself at home in the hut of this wife of her brother. She is the first to be called to beer there; she must be invited to all activities such as work-parties held by the 'house'; all sickness is reported to her; she is called in to discuss the marriage of all sons and daughters of that 'house'. She or her eldest uterine sister is the one who magically protects a new homestead by drawing a medicated branch in a magical circle around it. If her father and mother are dead she sees to it that her brother treats his wife properly. He cannot chase her away or divorce her unless his sister believes his action to be justifiable; and she may, and very often does, take her brother's wife to live with her in her husband's village if he ill-treats her. She has an interest in this 'house' for here her son will find a wife. When her brother dies it is she and her sisters who will distribute the inheritance. The sanction for her control is a religious one: if she is 'dissatisfied in her heart' this may 'stir up the ancestors' and cause a child of her brother to be ill—a very powerful weapon.

*Development of a House*

Let us consider the growth and development of a house for it is only by a very gradual process that a house reaches full stature. The marriage of every woman marks the birth of a new unit which may become in time an independent homestead though it does not always do so. This is possible at the earliest only when the eldest son has married a wife and